



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

ANDOVER-HARVARD LIBRARY



AH 4YUV /

Harvard Depository
Brittle Book

771 RTS
 y/ Re. 3.37.

יהוה



ISRAEL'S PRAYER
IN TIME OF TROUBLE,

WITH GOD'S GRACIOUS ANSWER;

AN EXPLICATION OF THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER OF HOSEA.



**IN SEVEN SERMONS,
PREACHED UPON DAYS OF SOLEMN HUMILIATION.**

BY THE
REV. EDWARD REYNOLDS, D.D.
AFTERWARDS BISHOP OF NORWICH.

L O N D O N :
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;
Instituted 1799.
DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW ; AND 65, ST.
PAUL'S CHURCHYARD ; AND SOLD BY THE
BOOKSELLERS.
1838.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Preface	5

SERMON I.

Q Israel return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: (or <i>give good</i> ;) so will we render the calves of our lips.—Hosea xiv. 1, 2.	7
--	---

SERMON II.

So will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods, &c.—Hosea xiv. 2, 3.	59
---	----

SERMON III.

Same text	88
-----------------	----

SERMON IV.

Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.—Hosea xiv. 3, 4.	128
---	-----

SERMON V.

Page

I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.—Hosea xiv. 5—7. 173

SERMON VI.

Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir-tree. From me is thy fruit found.—Hosea xiv. 8.... 223

SERMON VII.

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.—Hosea xiv. 9..... 261

TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN reader, understanding that my sermon, which was preached three years since before the Honourable House of Commons, on the day of their solemn humiliation, was to be reprinted, I thought fit to peruse, transcribe, and enlarge six other sermons, in which I had at mine own charge in the country, on the ensuing fast days, briefly explained and applied that whole chapter, (a portion only whereof was in the first handled,) and to send them forth together with it unto the public. Which I was the rather induced to do for these two reasons. 1. Because it hath pleased God in his righteous and holy providence to make me, by a long infirmity, unserviceable to his church in the principal work of the ministry, the preaching of the gospel, which is no small grief unto me. So that there remained no other means whereby my life might, in regard of my function, be useful to the church, and comfortable to myself, than by inverting the words of the Psalmist, and as he made his tongue as the pen of a ready writer, so to make my pen the tongue of an unready speaker. 2. I considered the seasonableness and suitableness of these meditations unto the condition of the sad and disconsolate times wherein we live, very like those which our prophet threatened the ten tribes withal throughout this whole prophecy, unto which this last chapter is a kind of use, and a most solemn exhortation pressing upon all wise and prudent men such duties of humiliation and repentance, as might turn threats into promises, and recover again the mercies which by their sins they had forfeited and forsaken: which being restored unto them according to their petition, they are here likewise further instructed in what manner to return unto God

the praises due to his great name. And these two duties of humiliation and thanksgiving, are the most solemn duties, which in these times of judgments and mercies, so variously interwoven together, the Lord doth so frequently call us unto.

Places of scripture I have for brevity sake, for the most part, only quoted and referred thee unto, without transcribing all the words, and have usually put many parallel places together, because by that means they do not only strengthen the doctrine whereunto they belong, but mutually give light unto one another.

The Lord make us all in this our day so wise and prudent, as to understand the righteous ways of our God towards us: that we may not stumble at them, but walk in them, and be taught by them to wait upon him in the way of his judgments, and to fix the desires of our soul upon his name as our great refuge, and upon his righteousness as our great business, till he shall be pleased by the dew of his grace, to revive us as the corn, to make us grow as the vine, and to let the scent of all his ordinances be over all our land, as the smell, and as the wine of Lebanon.

It will be an abundant return unto my poor and weak endeavours, if I may have that room in thy prayers which the apostle Paul desired to have in the prayers of the Ephesians, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to preach the mystery of the gospel.

The Lord sanctify all the ways of his providence towards us, that when we are chastened, we may be taught, and may be greater gainers by the voice of his rod, than we are sufferers by the stripes.

A. D. 1658.

SERMON I.

O ISRAEL, RETURN UNTO THE LORD THY GOD, FOR THOU HAST FALLEN BY THINE INIQUITY. TAKE WITH YOU WORDS, AND TURN TO THE LORD, SAY UNTO HIM, TAKE AWAY ALL INIQUITY, AND RECEIVE US GRACIOUSLY : (OR GIVE GOOD :) SO WILL WE RENDER THE CALVES OF OUR LIPS. HOSEA XIV. 1, 2.

THE blessing of Ephraim was according to his name, fruitfulness. The fruitfulness of the earth, a bough by a well, and the fruitfulness of the womb, and of the breasts, Gen. xlix. 22. 25. Deut. xxxiii. 13—17. Contrary unto which two blessings, we find in our prophet two judgments threatened against him for his sins, chap. xiii. 15, 16. "Though he be fruitful amongst his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up, he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God : they shall fall by the sword ; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ript up." And throughout the whole prophecy, if you read and observe it, you will find the judgments of God against Ephraim to be expressed by weeds, emptiness, barrenness, dryness of roots, of fruits, of branches, of springs, and by a curse upon their children, as on the other side, the

blessings here in this chapter renewed unto Ephraim repenting, are all expressed by metaphors of fruitfulness, ver. 5—7.

From these two woful judgments, against the fruitfulness of their springs, and the fruitfulness of their wombs, by the desolations of a bloody sword, our prophet taketh occasion, once more for all, to awaken and drive them to a timely repentance ; that so they may recover the blessing of their name, Ephraim may be Ephraim again, a plentiful, a fruitful, a flourishing people ; that when God's judgments are in the earth, they would then at least set themselves to learn righteousness.

Of all nations under heaven, this land of ours hath had the blessing of Ephraim upon it, fruitfulness of the earth, abundance of plenty ; fruitfulness of the womb, abundance of people. But our misery is, that the abundance of our sins hath mightily outvied the abundance both of our plenty and of our people : sins, too, parallel to those of Ephraim, if you will but read this prophet, and compare the behaviour of this nation with him. And this parity of sins hath no doubt called upon God for a parity of judgments. Though I must read my text, " O Israel," yet I must apply it, " O England," " return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity, take with you words," &c.

The whole context contains two general parts.

I. An invitation unto repentance, ver. 1. and,

II. An instruction how to perform it, in the two verses following.

Before we come to the particulars of the invitation, let us first briefly observe, that in the midst of judgments proposed against sinners that are obstinate, God doth reserve and proclaim mercy unto sinners

that are penitent. When a consumption is decreed, yet a remnant is reserved to return, Isa. x. 22, 23. The Lord will keep his vineyard, when he will burn up the thorns and the briers together, Isa. xxvii. 3, 4. When a day of fierce anger is determined, the meek of the earth are called upon to seek the Lord, Zeph. ii. 3. When the Lord is coming out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, he calls upon his people to hide themselves in their chambers, until the indignation be overpast, Isa. xxvi. 20, 21. The angel who was sent to destroy Sodom, had withal a commission to deliver Lot, Gen. xix. 15. God made full provision for those who mourned for public abominations, before he gave order to destroy the rest, Ezek. ix. 4, 6. Men in their wrath will many times rather strike a friend than spare a foe; but God's proceedings are without disorder, he will rather spare his foes than strike his servants, as he showed himself willing to have done in the case of Sodom, Gen. xviii. 26. Moses stood in the gap, and diverted judgments from Israel, Psal. cvi. 23. Yea, God seeks for such, Ezek. xxii. 30. and complains when they cannot be found, Ezek. xiii. 5. And if he deliver others for them, certainly he will not destroy them for others. However it go with the world and with wicked men, it shall go well with the righteous, there shall be a sanctuary for them when others stumble, and they shall pass through the fire, when others are consumed by it, Isa. iii. 10, 11. viii. 14—16. Zech. xii. 8, 9.

The reasons hereof are, first, God's justice—he will not punish the righteous with the wicked; he will have it appear that there is a “difference between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not,” Gen. xviii. 23. Mal. iii. 18. Also, God's love unto his people.

He hath a book of remembrance written before him, for them that fear him, and think upon his name ; “ And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him,” Mal. iii. 6. 17. Here is a climax and gradation of arguments drawn from love. In a great fire, and devouring trouble, (such as is threatened, chap. iv. 1.) property alone is a ground of care ; a man would willingly save and secure that which is his own, and of any use unto him ; but if you add unto this, preciousness, that increaseth the care. A man will make hard shift to deliver a rich cabinet of jewels, though all his ordinary goods and utensils should perish. But of all jewels, those which come out of the body are much more precious than those which only adorn it. Who would not rather snatch his child than his casket or purse out of a flame : relation works not only upon the affection, but upon the most tender feelings of the heart, Jer. xxxi. 20. And lastly, the same excellency that the word *jewel* adds unto the word *mine* ; the same excellency *service* adds unto the word *son*. A man hath much conflict in himself to take off his heart from an undutiful son. Never was there a worse son than Absalom, and yet how did David give charge to the commanders to have him spared ! How inquisitive after his safety ! How passionately and unseasonably mournful upon the news of his death ! But if any child be more a jewel than another, certainly it is a dutiful child, who hath not only an interest in our love by nature, but by obedience. All these grounds of care and protection for God’s people in trouble are here expressed—property, they are mine ; preciousness, they are jewels, treasures, ornaments unto me ; relation, they are sons ; usefulness, they are sons that

serve: none could look on a thing so many ways lovely, with the same eye as upon a professed and provoking enemy.

Lastly, God's name and glory—He hath spared his people even in the midst of their provocations for his name's sake, Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27. Josh. vii. 9. How much more when they repent and seek his face! He will never let it be said, that any "seek the Lord in vain," Isa. xlv. 19.

But it may be objected, does not Solomon say, that all things happen alike unto all? and that "no man can know love or hatred by that which is before him?" Eccl. ix. 1, 2. And is it not certain and common, that in public desolations good as well as bad do perish? Does not the sword devour as well one as another?

It is true, God does not always distinguish his servants from wicked men by temporal deliverances: troubles commonly and promiscuously involve all sorts; but there are these two things to be remarked in it.

1. That many times the good suffer with the bad, because they are together corrupted with them, and when they join in the common provocations, no wonder if they suffer in the common judgments, Rev. xviii. 4. Nay, the sins of God's people do (especially in this case) more provoke him unto outward judgments than the sins of his professed enemies. Because they expose his name to the more contempt, 2 Sam. xii. 14. and are committed against the greater love, Amos iii. 2. and he hath future judgment for the wicked, and therefore usually beginneth here at his own sanctuary, Ezek. ix. 6. 1 Pet. iv. 17.

2. When good men, who have preserved themselves

from public sins, do yet fall by public judgments, yet there is a great difference in this seeming equality, the same affliction having, like the pillar that went before Israel, a light side towards God's people, and a dark side toward the Egyptians. God usually recompensing the outward evils of his people with more plentiful evidences of inward and spiritual joy. A good man may be in great darkness as well as a wicked man, but in that case he hath the name of God to stay himself upon, which no wicked man in the world hath, Isa. l. 10. The metal and the dross go both into the fire together, but the dross is consumed, the metal refined. So is it with the godly and wicked in their sufferings, Zech. xiii. 9. Ecol. viii. 12, 13.

This reprove the folly of those who in time of trouble rely upon vain things which cannot help them, and continue their sins still. For judgments make no difference of any but penitent and impenitent; sickness does not compliment with an honourable person, but uses him as coarsely as the base. Death knocks as well at a prince's palace as a poor man's cottage; wise men die as well as fools. Yet poison usually works more violently when tempered with wine, than with some duller and baser material. In times of trouble usually the greater the persons, the closer the judgments. When Jerusalem was taken, the nobles were slain, but the poor of the land had vineyards and fields given them, Jer. xxxix. 6. 10.

Therefore, in troubles we should be more humbled for our sins than our sufferings, because sin is the sting of suffering. That mercies should not win us, that judgment should not awaken us, that the rod should speak, and we not hear, Mic. vi. 9. that the fire should burn, and we not feel, Isa. xlii. 25. that desolation should be threatened and we not be instructed,

Jer. vi. 8. that the hand of God should be lifted up, and we not see it, Isa. xxvi. 11. that darkness should be upon us, and we not give glory to God, Jer. xiii. 16. This is that which should most deject us, that in mercies we have been wanton, and in judgments senseless. Get repentance by an affliction, and then you may look on it as traffic, and not as a trouble, like a merchant's voyage, which hath pain in the way, but treasure in the end. No afflictions can hurt him who is penitent. If thou escape, they will make thee the more thankful ; if not, they will bring thee the nearer and the sooner unto God.

The way to be safe in times of trouble, is to get the blood of the lamb upon our doors, Exod. xii. 13. 23. All troubles have their commission and instructions from God, what to do, whither to go, whom to touch, whom to pass over. Be gold, and though the fire come upon you, you shall keep your nature and purity still. Godliness, saith the apostle, hath the promises of this life ; and amongst those one special one is, that we shall not be tempted above what we are able, 1 Cor. x. 13. neither are there indeed any distresses against which there is not a refuge and escape for penitent sinners unto some promise or other. Against captivity : " When they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor abhor them," Lev. xxvi. 44. Against famine and pestilence : " If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people. If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways ; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land," 2 Chron. vii. 13, 14. Against sickness : " The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of

languishing, and make all his bed in his sickness," Psal. xli. 3. Against poverty : " When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, 1 the Lord will hear them," &c. Isa. xli. 17. Psal. lxxviii. 10. Against want of friends : " When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Psal. xxvii. 10. lxxii. 12. Against oppression and imprisonment : He " executeth judgment for the oppressed. The Lord looseth the prisoners," Psal. cxlvi. 7. Against " whatsoever plague or trouble," 1 Kings viii. 37—39. He is the God of all consolation ; how disconsolate soever a man's condition is in any kind there cannot but be, within the compass of *all* consolation, some one remedy or other at hand to comfort and relieve him.

In the invitation, we have the matter of it, and the motives to it : the matter is conversion ; without that, the hand which is lifted up in threatening will fall down in punishing, and where that is, God hath a book of remembrance for his jewels, when his wrath burneth as an oven against the stubble, Mal. iii. 16.

But this conversion then must have two conditions in it.

1. It must be to the Lord : not merely philosophical, to some low and general dictates of reason, such as Aristotle, or Plato, or Epictetus, or Plutarch, or the like heathen moralists, could furnish us withal, without self-denial, lowliness of spirit, or faith in Christ ; nor merely political, to credit, or profit, or secular ends, or, as our prophet hath it, " for corn and for wine," Hos. vii. 16. as good be an empty vine, as bring forth fruit only to ourselves, Hos. x. 1. —but it must be spiritual, unto the Lord. " If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me," Jer. iv. 1. And not only to the Lord, for that may

be done falsely, and flatteringly, with a halting and divided heart ; by the force of semi-persuasions, like that of Agrippa, and Orpah, complimenting with God, and then forsaking him ; by the force of compulsory impressions, like that of Pharaoh and Israel in the wilderness,—promises on the rack, and pride when there was respite again, thawing in the sun, and freezing in the shade, melting in the furnace, and out of it returning unto hardness again, like the prophet's cake, burnt on the one side, and dough on the other ;—but it must be, Hosea vii. 8.

2. A full, thorough, constant, continued conversion, with a whole, a fixed, a rooted, a united, an established heart, yielding up the whole conscience and conversation to be ruled by God's will in all things

The motives to this duty are two : 1. His mercy ; he is yet *thy God*. No such argument for our turning unto God as his turning unto us. Adam looks on him as a *judge*, and hides ; the prodigal looks on him as a *father*, and returns. As the beam of the sun shining on fire discourages the burning of that, so the shining of God's mercies on us should dishearten and extinguish lust in us ; this is the use we should make of mercy. Say not, He is my God, therefore I may presume upon him ; but, He is mine, therefore I must return unto him. Because he is God, I will be afraid to provoke him ; and because he is mine, I will be afraid to forfeit him. He is so great, I must not dare to offend him ; he is so precious, I must not venture to lose him. His mercy is a holy mercy, which knows how to pardon sin, but not to protect it. It is a sanctuary for the penitent, not for the presumptuous. 2. His judgment, and that expressed rather as our act than his, Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

If mercies do not work upon love, let judgments work upon fear. Extremities are a warrant unto importunities. Even heathen mariners in a storm will cry mightily upon God. When there is a deluge coming, is it not time for Noah to fear, and to prepare an ark? Heb. xi. 7. What meanest thou, O thou sleeper, to lose the season and benefit of God's visitations? when there is a tempest over the ship, heavy distresses, and distractions both at home and abroad, to be so secure in thy wonted impenitency, as if thou hadst had no sins to procure these judgments, or no sense to feel them? as if there were agreements, and sealed covenants between thee and the sword, that it should not touch thee? If thou be falling, is it not high time to consider thy ways? to search and to judge thyself? to have thine eyes, like the windows of Solomon's temple, broad inwards, to find out thine own provocations, and, as David speaks, to keep thyself from thine own iniquity?

Thus, when in one and the same time, mercies and judgments are intermixed, then is the most solemn season to call upon men for repentance. If we felt nothing but fears, they might make us despair; if nothing but mercies, they would make us secure. If the whole year were summer, the sap of the earth would be exhausted; if the whole were winter, it would be quite buried. The hammer breaks metal, and the fire melts it, and then you may cast it into any shape. Judgments break, mercies melt, and then, if ever, the soul is fit to be cast into God's mould. There is no figure in all the prophets more usual than this, to interweave mercies and judgments; to allure and to bring into a wilderness, Hos. ii. 14. And this of all other is the critical time of diseased people, wherein the chief conjuncture lieth, whether they are mending

or ending, according to the use which they make of such interwoven mercies.

I have cursorily run over the first part of the context—the invitation unto repentance,—as intending to enlarge on the second, which is—

II. The instruction how to perform it. Therein we have, 1. A general instruction, “Take unto you words;” 2. A particular form, what words they should take, or a petition drawn to their hands, “Take away all iniquity,” &c.

1. A general instruction. Of this I shall speak but a little. It imports the serious pondering and choosing of requests to put up to God. The mother of Artaxerxes, in Plutarch, was wont to say, that they who would address themselves unto princes, must use silken words. Surely he that would approach unto God, must consider, and look as well to his words as to his feet. He is so holy and jealous of his worship, that he expects there should be preparation in our accesses unto him. Preparation of our persons by purity of life, Job xi. 13. Preparation of our services, by choice of matter, John ix. 31. Luke xv. 17, 18. Preparation of our hearts, by finding them out, stirring them up, fixing them, fetching them in, and calling together all that is within us, to prevail with God.

The services which we thus prepare must be taken from him. They must not be the issues of our own private and fleshly hearts. For nothing can go to God, but that which comes from him; and this phrase seems to import these three things. 1. We must attend unto his will, as the rule of our prayers. 2. We must attend unto his precepts and promises, as the matter of our prayers. 3. We must attend unto the guidance of his Holy Spirit, as the life and principle of our prayers, without which we know not what to ask.

And prayers thus regulated are most seasonable, and sovereign duties in times of trouble; the key which opens a door of mercy, the sluice which keeps out an inundation of judgments. Jacob wrestled and obtained a blessing, Hos. xii. 4. Amos prayed, and removed a curse, Amos vii. 3. 7, 8. The woman of Canaan will not be denied with a denial, Matt. xv. 24. 27. The people of Israel will beg for deliverance, even then when God had positively told them, that he would deliver them no more, Judg. x. 13. 15. Jonah will venture a prayer from the bottom of the sea, when a double death had seized upon him, the belly of the deep, and the belly of the whale, and that prayer of his opened the doors of the leviathan, as the expression is, Job xli. 14. and made one of those deaths a deliverance from the other.

O let the Lord's remembrancers give him no rest. There is a kind of omnipotence in prayer, as having an interest and prevalence with God's omnipotence. It hath loosed iron chains; it hath opened iron gates; it hath unlocked the windows of heaven; it hath broken the bars of death. Satan hath three titles given him in the scripture, setting forth his malignity against the church of God. A dragon, to note his malice; a serpent, to note his subtlety; and a lion, to note his strength: but none of all these can stand before prayer. The greatest malice, the malice of Haman, sinks under the prayer of Esther; the deepest policy, the counsel of Ahithophel, withers before the prayer of David; the largest army, a host of a thousand thousand Ethiopians, run away like cowards before the prayer of Asa.

How should this encourage us to treasure up our prayers! to besiege the throne of grace with armies of supplications! to refuse a denial! to break through

a repulse! God hath blessed those whom he did cripple; he hath answered those whom he did reproach; he hath delivered those whom he did deny; and he is the same yesterday and to day. If he save in six and in seven troubles, should not we pray in six and seven extremities? Certainly, in all the afflictions of the church, when prayers are strongest, mercies are nearest.

And therefore let me humbly recommend, amongst all other pressing affairs, the providing that those solemn days, wherein the united prayers of this whole kingdom should with strongest importunities stop the breaches, and stand in the gaps of which judgments are ready to rush in upon us, may with more obedience and solemnity be observed, than indeed of late they are. It is true, here, and in other cities, and populous places, there is perhaps less cause to complain. But who can without sorrow and shame behold in our country towns, men so unapprehensive either of their brethren's sufferings, or of their own sins and dangers, as to give God quite over, to let him rest, that they themselves may work, to come in truth to Jehoram's resolution, Why should they wait upon God any longer? to grudge their brethren's and their own souls and safeties one day in thirty, and to tell all the world that indeed their day's work is of more value with them than their day's worship; multitudes drudging and moyling in the earth, while their brethren are mourning and besieging of Heaven. I do but name it, and proceed,—

2. To the particular form suggested unto them, according unto which their addresses unto God are to be regulated;—it consisted of two parts—a prayer, and a promise. The prayer is for two benefits; the one, removal of sin, the other conferring of good.

In the promise or re-stipulation we have first their covenant, wherein they promise two things; 1. Thanksgiving for the hearing and answering of their prayers; 2. A special care for the amendment of their lives: and, secondly, the ground of their confidence so to pray, and of their resolution so to promise, "Because in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." My meditations will be confined within the first of these—the prayer of the church in their fears and sufferings; wherein I shall begin, in the prophet's order, with their prayer against sin, "Take away all iniquity." The word signifies, 1. To expiate, and make atonement by a sacrifice. So the scape-goat (which was a sign of Christ our sacrifice as risen and living again) is said to carry the sins of the people into the wilderness, Lev. xvi. 22. Thereby signifying Christ's taking our sins from us, John i. 29. Heb. ix. 28. 2. To forgive, which in the court of mercy is the taking of sin away, Psal. xxxii. 1. 5. 3. To remove or take away by destroying. So it is used, Hos. i. 6. Job xxxii. 22. and is sometimes used to express burning, 2 Sam. v. 21. Nahum i. 5. sin is said to be destroyed, Rom. vi. 6. to be subdued, Mic. vii. 19. to be purged away with the spirit of judgment and burning, Isa. iv. 4. The meaning then is, Take away all our sins from us, lay them upon Christ our sacrifice; for his merit pardon them, by his grace destroy and subdue them, that so the root of judgments being removed, they likewise may therewithal be removed too. From hence the observation. which I shall insist upon is this:

When God threateneth judgments, we in our conversion unto him should pray against sins. Our eye of sorrow should be more upon that which dishonours him, than upon that which afflicts ourselves;

more upon that which is contrary to his image, than upon that which is contrary to our own nature ; more upon that which defiles, than upon that which pains us. Pharaoh cares for nothing but the removal of death : Simon Magus for nothing but to have perdition and the gall of bitterness kept from him. But good men, like wise physicians, cure the disease at the root, as Elisha did the waters by putting salt into the spring head. The angel was smiting the people with a plague ; David betakes himself to the right remedy,—I have sinned, I have done wickedly : he goes not to the physicians, but to the altar to make atonement for sin ; and so the plague was stayed. Destruction was threatened against Israel for their calf, their murmurings, their rebellions ; Moses stands in the gap to divert it. But how doth he do it ? surely by praying against their sins ; O this people have sinned a great sin, O that thou wouldest forgive them ! *Exod. xxxii. 31.* A sick man was brought to Christ to be healed, *Matt. ix. 2* ; Christ overlooks the disease, and begins at the sin : Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee : and this being forgiven, the malignity of the disease was removed, though the matter should have remained. This was the usual method of David in his troubles, to throw over these Shebas that had wrought his woe ; Blot out, wash thoroughly, cleanse, create, renew. He is far more importunate for pardon and cleansing, than for ease and comfort. Complaining in trouble is the work of a man, but repenting is the work of a christian.

The reasons of this point are these three :

1. If a judgment should be removed, while sin remains, it is not removed in mercy, but in anger : for many times God gives over punishing in displeasure, as a man throws away the rod when his scholar is

incorrigible. "Why should you be smitten any more? you will revolt more and more," Isa. i. 5. If men be settled on their lees, and will not be reclaimed, there cannot a heavier punishment light upon them, than to be without punishment; to be left to themselves and the fury of their own wills, speedily to work out their own perdition, that their own pleasures may become their plagues, and the liberty of their own lusts their sorest bondage. God may take away in wrath that which he sent in anger, Hos. xiii. 11. as on the other side he may punish sin then when he forgiveth it, and may visit iniquity with rods then when he will "not utterly take away his loving kindness from a people," Psal. xcix. 8. lxxxix. 32, 33.

2. If a judgment be removed, so long as sin remains, either the same or a worse is likely to succeed, for God will overcome when he judgeth. Pharaoh's stubbornness did but increase his plagues. God will not endure that the pride of man should outvie his justice. If we do not take Christ's warning to go and sin no more, we have great cause to fear his inference, that "a worse thing will come upon us," John v. 14. If we do yet exalt ourselves, God will yet plead with us. If we will walk contrary unto him, he threateneth to do the like unto us, and to punish us seven times more for our sins. If we do not turn unto him that smiteth us, then his anger in smiting shall not be turned away, but his hand shall be stretched out still. God can bring clouds after rain, distresses in Ireland after distractions in Scotland, and distractions in England after distresses in Ireland, mischief upon mischief, and counsel against counsel, Manassch against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, to vex, and weary out a sinful people, till they pine away in their calamities.

3. Sin being removed, though the afflictions should not be removed, yet they are sanctified and turned into good. Repentance, like the philosopher's stone, can turn iron into gold, can make golden afflictions: so the trial of our faith, that is, our affliction, is said to be "more precious than gold," 1 Pet. i. 7. Whereas sin remaining is like copperas which will turn wine or milk into ink. It converts the blessing of God into the provisions of lusts. It cankers learning with pride, and wit with profaneness, and wealth with luxury; like leaven which turns a very passover into pollution, 1 Cor. v. 8. As the pearl, which is an ornament to the woman who wears it, is a disease to the fish which breeds it; as the same perfume which refreshes a dove, is mortal to a vulture; as the same pillar and cloud was light to Israel, but dark to Egypt; the same deep was a path to Israel, but a grave to Egypt: so the same blessings which by grace are converted into comforts, by sin are abused into dishonourable services. Sweet powders can make leather an ornament, when the sanies (corrupt matter) of a plague-sore will render a robe infectious. As it was said of Naaman, he was a great man, an honourable man, a mighty man of war, but he was a leper: so whatever other ornaments a man hath, sin stains them with the foulest "*but*" that can be brought to deprave the fairest endowments;—a learned man, a wealthy man, a wise man, an honourable man, *but* a wicked man. This makes all those other good things tributary unto Satan.

And therefore, as the gold and silver of the Canaanites was to pass through the fire before it could be used by Israel, so all other blessings bestowed on men must pass through the spirit of judgment and burning, through the purifying waters of repentance,

before they can bring honour to the author, or comfort to the enjoyer of them. When Christ overcometh Satan, "he taketh from him all his armour, and divideth the spoils," Luke xi. 22. How doth he divide the spoils? surely he maketh use of that wit, wealth, power, learning, wisdom, interests, which Satan used against Christ's kingdom, as instruments and ornaments unto the gospel. As when a magazine in war is taken, the general makes use of those arms which were provided against him for his own service. And as sin doth thus corrupt blessings, so on the other side repentance doth sweeten judgments, and can turn afflictions into matter of comfort. Repentance, though it should not remove a judgment, yet can feed upon it; and fetch meat out of the eater, and out of the strong sweetness.

There are two evils in afflictions—their thorns in the flesh, as they are matter of pain, and their snare to the conscience, as they are matter of temptation; as there are two things in a chain or fetter—the heaviness whereby it loads, and the hardness whereby it galls. Now a prisoner, though he cannot make his chain lighter than it is, yet by lining it with wool or other soft things, he can prevent the galling; so repentance, though it take not away the pain of affliction from the flesh, yet by meekening and humbling the soul, with silence and quietness to bear the indignation of the Lord, and accept of the punishment of sin, it removeth the temptation and malignity of it from the conscience. And thus as Protagoras by his natural dexterity ordered the burden which he was to bear with more ease and advantage, so piety by spiritual prudence makes judgments more easy to be borne; and the light yoke of Christ, as floats in a deep water, bears up the spirits of men from sinking, and lighteneth every

other burden. And therefore as he in Plutarch said of the Scythians, that though they had no music nor vines amongst them, yet they had gods ; so whatever other things may be wanting to a people, yet if God be their God, they are not destitute of any happiness. Yea, as those roses usually smell sweetest which grow nearest unto stinking weeds, so the comforts of God's Spirit are strongest when a man is otherwise perplexed with the greater difficulties. It was promised unto Josiah that he should die in peace, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 28. and yet we find that he was slain in war, chap. xxxv. 24. His weeping and humiliation altered the very nature of trouble, and made war to be peace unto him.

Now for the use and application of this point.—It serves, first to instruct us how to deprecate calamities when God shaketh his rod over us. There is nothing in all the world that God is angry with but sin : for all other things are his own works, in the goodness of which he rested with singular complacency and delight. Sin is that against which God's arrows are directed ; and as the arrow sticks in the butt unto which the mark is fastened, so the judgments which are shot at sin, must needs light upon us unto whom sin cleaveth. The way then to divert the arrow is to remove the mark. It is true, God doth sometimes bring afflictions without respect to the provocations of sin, upon his best servants. As if a man should shape out of a mass of gold some excellent vessel, though the gold be ever so pure, yet it must pass through the fire and under the hammer. But it is certain too, that no affliction comes in anger but with respect to sin ; and the anger of God is the bitterest thing in any calamity.

Now for this turning from sin, there is no way but to get sin removed. Take the bark from a tree, and

the sap can never find way to the boughs : sin is the vehicle which carries shame and sorrow to the soul ; take away that, and a judgment hath no commission. You may find an error in it, if you be not the same men that you were when it issued forth, for God shoots no arrows to hurt the body of his Son. It is true, Job complains that " God's arrows did stick in him," Job vi. 4. But these were not for destruction, but for trial ; as men shoot bullets against armour of proof, not to hurt it, but to praise it. Job in this case was brought forth, not as a malefactor to suffer, but as a champion to triumph. Let a man take what course he can to keep off God's judgments, and hide himself in the closest protection that human power or policy can contrive, so long as he keeps his sin with him, God's arrows will get through at one joint or other. A naked man with innocence, is better armed than Goliath in brass or iron.

We are apt in our distresses to howl and repine, to gnaw our tongues, and tear our flesh in the anguish of our sufferings. Like the silly hart, which runs mourning and bleeding, but never thinks of getting out the fatal dart which sticks in his side. We look upward to see whether help will drop into our mouths ; and we look downward, to see whether human succours will avail us. But we look not inward, to find out the plague of our own hearts, that we may be rid of that. And till this be done, sin doth as naturally draw and suck judgments to it, as the loadstone doth iron, or turpentine fire. Whence comes it that our distractions remain unremoved ? Certainly our leaks are not stopped, our sins are not thrown away, we labour at the pump to get the water out, but we do not take care to cure the passage at which it enters in ; we are old bottles still, and God will not put new

wine into old bottles. If men would spend their murmurings and reproaches rather upon their *sins* than upon their *physicians*, the work would be sooner done. When the temple of God was to be rebuilt, and a public restitution of the face of things unto glory and splendour was in agitation, the prophets call upon God's people in special then to repent. Impenitence puts obstructions to God's mercy, and to all noble enterprises. So long as our lives are as bad as before, how can we expect that our condition should be better? in that case mercies themselves become no mercies: as in the case of repentance, judgments would be no judgments. If we turn from our evil ways, God hath engaged himself by a solemn promise, that "he will do us no harm," Jer. xxv. 6. Otherwise, to busy ourselves in outward ceremonies of repentance, bodily fasting, and verbal praying, is indeed but to flatter God, and, if we could, to deceive him. And God will answer such men not according to the prayer of their lips, but according to the "idol of their hearts," Ezek. xiv. 4, 5.

Further: this teaches us how to pray against sin. It must be against all, and in all respects. In the Hebrew text there is an unusual kind of transposition of the words. The word "*all*" is first. Methinks it doth intimate an intentness of the church upon that point, to have, if it were possible, all taken away at the very first. If there be one leak in a ship, one gap in a wall, one gate in a city unprovided for, it is enough to sink a ship, to drown a country, to betray a city. One little boy thrust in at a window, can unlock the door for all the rest of the thieves. It was but one Jonah that raised a tempest, but one Achan that troubled a camp, and one sin generally unrepented of, were enough to undo a kingdom. Do not say it

is a little one, and my soul shall live. Even the philosopher tells us, that sometimes the very smallest error proves most dangerous. How little soever it be in its own nature, it becomes heinous by the allowance. It is as much treason for a private man to coin silver as gold pieces, because the royal authority is as much violated by the one as the other.

This then we must first and principally remember—to set ourselves against all sin. In confession none to be dissembled, in supplication none to be excepted, in conversion none to be reserved: never give over so long as any is left. O Lord, yet it works, yet it lives, yet it tempts, yet it pains me. Sin hath not done accusing me, let not thy mercy have done forgiving sin. Sin hath not done rebelling in me, let not thy grace have done subduing sin. When men kill snakes or vipers, so long as they see them pant, or offer to thrust out a sting, they strike them still. Sin, like the thief on the cross, when it is fast nailed and kept from its old tyranny, yet will, as much as it can, revile, and spit out venom upon Christ. O therefore give it not over, break the legs of it, crucify it clean through, till it be quite dead. None can pray or turn unto God in truth, or hope to be delivered from judgments in mercy, so long as he holds fast any known sin. Can any man look to receive benefit by the blood of Christ, who hugs the villain that shed it? is it not treason knowingly to harbour and entertain a traitor? Whosoever loves and holds fast sin, lies unto God in every prayer that he makes.

This serves to prove and humble us for our hypocrisy and halvings with God, in our conversions from sin, and confessions of it; we are willing to pray for the pardon of them *all*, we would have none hurt us, but when it comes to parting, and taking all away,

this we cannot away with. Some are fat, delicate, golden sins, we would fain spare these, as Saul did Agag, and hide them, as Achan did his wedge. Herod hears John gladly in many things, but if he restrain him of his Herodias, he must expect to be himself restrained. Agrippa will be *almost* a christian, but "*altogether*" may chance bring a chain with it! Jehu will down with Baal and his priests, but he knows not how to part with his calves, lest he venture his kingdom. *Policy* is ever entering caveats against *piety*. Thus men huckster, and stand upon abatements with Christ in the bargain of salvation, not considering that the purchase of heaven is like the buying of the Sybil's prophecy, the longer we stand off, the dearer it will cost us every day; the more tears, the harder repentance, the deeper sorrow, the stronger cries. These men know not the price of a soul, nor the worth of a Saviour.

O if Christ should have served us so in dying for sin, as many of us do serve him in turning from sin, what a condition had our souls been in! If he had died for some sins, and not for others; if he had been unwilling to save us to the uttermost, as we are to serve him to the uttermost; if he should have stopt before he came to *consummatum est*,* and left any one drop of that bitter cup for us to drink after him, would it not have "caused our belly to swell, and our thigh to rot," Numb. v. 21. and made us for ever incapable of any other mercy than only a less damnation?

Well, beloved, Christ expecteth, that as he died *for all* sin, so we should die *to all*: he will be counted worthy of all acceptation, before he will bestow himself; he will not suffer his blood and his mercy to

* It is finished, John xix. 30.

minge with sin, or to be a protection to it: he cannot endure mingling of the holy seed with the profane: swearing by God, and swearing by Malcham: Samaritan services, to be for the Lord in one thing, and for the world and flesh in another; one step straight, and another crooked; one speech Ashdod, and another Canaan—to let our conversation be yea and nay, a mongrel service; in this I will do as you bid me, but in that I will not; like the Jews that would buy Christ's blood with money, but would not take the money into the treasury; they were fearful to defile their chests, but not to defile their consciences. This Christ cannot away with. It is dangerous to say with the pharisee, This I am not, and that I am not; or with the young man, This and that I have done, and in the mean time to have one thing lacking, to have one door locked up still to keep Christ and salvation from us: whosoever keeps a covetous heart for the world, or a sensual heart for the flesh, or a proud heart for the devil, is unworthy of heaven by his own election, and would not go in thither if the door were wide open: he would not find there any fuel for these his lusts, not any Nabal, or Cozbi, or Diotrephes to converse withal. And surely, he that doth any one wickedness with allowance, in God's construction, is habitually guilty of all, James ii. 10. Luke xvi. 10. Ezek. xviii. 10. 13.

Therefore, in this case, as Samuel said to Jesse, Are here all thy children? If any be left, we will not sit down till he come. So we must conceive in our confessions and renunciations of sin, that Christ asketh us, Are here all? If any be reserved, I will not take possession till that be cast out: there must not an hoof be left in Egypt, if God is to be served. God's law, as well as man's, disallows inmates in the same

house ; he will not endure a divided heart, he is heir of all things, there lies no writ of partition in his inheritance, his title is so good that he will never yield to a composition ; he will have all the heart or none.

Again : we should therefore be exhorted (in time of trouble especially) to set about this great work, to fall foul upon our sins, to complain against them to God, as the Achans that trouble Israel, as the corrupters and betrayers of our peace, to set ourselves in God's sight, and not to dare to lie unto his Holy Spirit, by falseness or hypocrisy ; as if we could reserve any one sin unmortified which he should not know of. But being in his sight to whom all things are naked and open, to deal in all sincerity, and to hate sin even as he hates it.

There are five notable duties which these words, "Take away all iniquity," lead us unto.

The first is, sense of sin, as of a heavy burden, as the prophet David calls it, Psal. xxxviii. 4. Such sense our Saviour requires in true penitents, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden," Matt. xi. 28. To conceive them heavier than a millstone, Luke xvii. 2. than the weight of a mountain, Luke xxiii. 30. Oh what apprehension had St. Peter's converts of sin, when they felt the nails wherewith they had crucified Christ sticking fast in their own hearts, and piercing their spirits with torment and horror ! Acts ii. 37. Oh what apprehensions had the poor jailer of his sins, when he came as a prisoner before his own prisoners, springing in with monstrous amazement, and consternation of spirit, beseeching them to tell him "what he should do !" Acts xvi. 23. 30.

Consider it in its nature ; a universal bruise and sickness, like those diseases which physicians say are

a corruption of the whole substance, from head to foot, Isa. i. 5, 6. And who doth not feel such a universal languor to be a heavy burden? for a man that must needs labour, to have weights hung at his hands; that must needs walk, to have clogs fastened to his feet, how can he avoid crying out with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Rom. vii. 24.

Consider it in the curse that belongs unto it. A roll written within and without with curses.

Look *outward*, and behold a curse in the creature; vanity, emptiness, vexation, disappointments, every creature armed with a sting, to revenge its Maker's quarrel.

Look *inward*, and behold a curse in the conscience; accusing, witnessing, condemning, haling to the tribunal of vengeance; first defiling with the allowance, and after terrifying with the remembrance, of sin.

Look *upward*, and behold a curse in the heavens; the wrath of God revealed from thence upon all unrighteousness.

Look *downward*, and behold a curse in the earth; death ready to put a period to all the pleasures of sin, and like a trap-door to let down into hell, where nothing of sin will remain, but the worm and the fire.

Look into the scriptures, and see the curse there described: an everlasting banishment from the glory of God's presence: an everlasting destruction by the glory of his power, 2 Thes. i. 9. The Lord showing the jealousy of his justice, the unsearchableness of his severity, the inconceivableness of his strength, the bottomless guilt and malignity of sin, in the everlasting destruction of ungodly men, and in the everlasting preserving of them to feel that destruction. "Who knoweth the power of thy anger?" saith Moses; "even

according to thy fear, so is thy wrath," Psal. xc. 11. It is impossible for the most trembling consciences, or the most jealous fears of a guilty heart, to look beyond the wrath of God, or to conceive more of it than indeed it is. As in peace of conscience the mercy of God is revealed unto believers, from faith to faith, so in anguish of conscience the wrath of God is revealed, from fear to fear.

A timorous man can fancy vast and terrible fears, fire, sword, tempests, wrecks, furnaces, scalding lead, boiling pitch, running bell-metal; and being kept alive in all these to feel their torment. But these come far short of the wrath of God; for there are bounds set to the hurting power of a creature, the fire can burn, but it cannot drown; the serpent can sting, but he cannot tear in pieces. Likewise the fears of the heart are bounded within those narrow apprehensions which itself can frame of the hurts which may be done. But the wrath of God proceeds from an infinite justice, and is executed by an omnipotent and unbounded power, comprising all the terror of all other creatures (as the sun doth all other light) eminently and excessively in it. It burns, and drowns, and tears, and stings, and bruises, and consumes, and can make nature feel much more than reason is able to comprehend.

O if we could lay these things seriously to heart, (and yet these are but low expressions, of that which cannot be expressed, and cometh as short of the truth itself, as the picture of the sun in a tablet, doth of the greatness and brightness of it in its own orb,) should we not find it necessary to cry out, Take away all iniquity! this sickness out of my soul, this sword, this nail, this poisoned arrow out of my heart; this dagger of Ehud out of my body, this millstone, this

mountain from off my back, these stings and terrors, these flames and furies out of my conscience? Lord, my wounds stink, my lips quiver, my knees tremble, I am feeble, and broken, and roar, and languish; thy wrath lies hard upon me, and thy waves go over my head.

O if we had but a view of sin as it is in its native foulness, and did feel but a touch of that fury which God is ready to pour out upon it, this would stain all the pride of man, and sour all the pleasures of sin, and make a man as fearful to meddle with it, as a guilty woman with the bitter water which caused the curse. Most true was that which Luther spake in this point, If a man could perfectly see his own evils, the sight thereof would be a perfect hell unto him: and this God will bring wicked men unto, "Reprove them, and set their sins in order before them," Psal. l. 21. Make them take a view of their own hearts and lives, fuller of sins than the firmament of stars, or a furnace of sparks. O consider this, you that forget me, saith the Lord, lest I tear you in picces, and there be none to deliver you.

The second duty is confession; for he that cries to have sin taken away, acknowledges that it lies upon him; a full confession, not of many, but of all sins, either actually committed, or habitually comprised in our body of sin. As he in the comedian, said, that he had invited two guests to dinner, Philocrates and Philocrates, a single man, but a double eater: so in examination of ourselves we shall every one find sins enough in himself to denominate him a double and a treble sinner. A free confession, not as Pharaoh's, extorted upon the rack; nor as that of Judas, squeezed out with anguish and horror; but ingenuous and penitent, arising from the purpose of a pious heart,

that comes like water out of a spring, with a voluntary freeness; not like water out of a still, which is forced with fire.

The third duty is weariness and detestation of all sin; for we call not to have a thing removed till we be weary of it. Thus we are taught in the scriptures to be ashamed, and confounded; to loathe, and abhor, to judge and condemn ourselves; to throw sin away as a detestable thing, though it be a golden or silver sin. A spiritual judgment looks on all sin as filthy and stinking; shows a man to himself as a vessel full of dung and scum, and makes him out of quiet till he be thoroughly purged. For hatred is against the whole kind of that which we hate.

The fourth duty is an acknowledgment of our own impotence to remove sin from ourselves. We have no more power than a slave in chains has to get out of his bondage till another ransom him, than a dead body in a grave till Christ raise it. Our iniquity takes hold on us, and keeps us down, that we cannot hearken or be subject to the will of God. If sin were not removed by a greater strength than our own, it would most certainly sink us into hell.

The last duty is an imploring of God's mercy and grace, that what we cannot do ourselves, he would be pleased to do for us. In works of art it is hard to build, but easy to destroy. But in works of sin, though our weakness is able to commit them, yet none but God's power is able to demolish them. None but Christ is strong enough to overcome the strong man. His person only hath strength enough to bear the curse of sin: his sacrifice only merit enough to make expiation for sin. His grace only virtue enough to remove the pollution of sin. Though we should take nitre and much soap, our sin would be marked still;

but he cometh with refiner's fire and with fuller's soap, and can wash out all. It was his business of coming into the world, to destroy the works of the devil.

Now the things which we pray for in this petition are these three :

First. For remission, that God would take away the condemnation of sin from us, by not imputing the guilt thereof unto us, but would cause it to pass over on Christ, on whom he hath laid the iniquity of his people. Such an expression the Holy Ghost useth, The Lord hath caused thy sin to pass over from thee, 2 Sam. xii. 13. that is, to Christ, which being obtained, all other judgments are in fact removed too, so far as they import proper and vindictive punishment.

Second. For sanctification, that the virtue of Christ's death, and the grace of his Spirit may subdue the power of sin, and cleanse and strengthen our consciences against the commands of it, and temptations unto it.

Third. For continued renovation, that as in sanctification begun we have power against all kinds of sin, so, by the continual supplies of the Holy Spirit, we may have further power against all degrees and remainders of sin. That Christ would pursue our sin unto death, as our sin did him, and not give over mortifying it, till his blood be revenged of it to the uttermost, and our souls delivered from it to the uttermost.

I shall conclude the first part of the petition with a short word of exhortation. Those things which God worketh in us, and bestoweth upon us by his grace, he also requireth of us by his command. Sometimes he promiseth to turn us, sometimes he commandeth us to turn to him ; sometimes he biddeth us put away sin, and

sometimes he promiseth to take it away from us. In the one, showing us what is our duty, and in the other, where is our help. And as this latter consideration calls upon our faith to pray; so the former upon our obedience to work. I shall therefore (right honourable*) humbly offer a double exhortation unto all of you.

First. That every one of you would seriously endeavour to take away all iniquity from his own person. And unto this there lieth upon you a double obligation; one with relation to the safety of your own souls, for whatever other honour, wealth, wisdom, learning, interest, a man hath besides, if sin have the predominancy, they are but Satan's magazine, and that man his servant, to employ them against God that gave them: and the more mercies any man hath been trusted withal, the heavier judgment will be poured out upon the breach of that trust. Better be a wooden vessel to hold wine, than a silver vessel to hold filth; better be a beggar with the treasure of God's grace, than a prince with the load of a man's own sins.

But there is a further tie upon you, with relation unto the success of that honourable employment whereunto you are called. God will be sanctified in all those that draw near unto him, as well in civil as in sacred administrations. It is very hard for a person in whom sin rules, to be constantly faithful to any public and honourable service; for "grace only establisheth the heart," Heb. xiii. 9. Ahithophel, a man of great wisdom, falls from David: Joab, a man of great valour, falls from Solomon. And admit he be faithful, yet the sin of his heart sends out a prohibition to the wisdom of his head, and the labour of his hand: he

* This sermon was preached before the House of Commons.

that will be a fit vessel for his master's use, must first of all purge himself, 2 Tim. ii. 21. as we first cleanse a vessel before we use it. When Joshua was to negotiate a public reformation, and to administer a public service, his filthy garment must be taken from him, and he must be clothed with change of raiment, Zech. iii. 4. 7. Let every one of you make his public service one argument more than he had before, for his necessary reformation, and let the piety of your lives bear witness to the integrity of your honourable undertakings.

Second. As you must take away sin from yourselves, so make it your principal work to take away iniquity out of the land: liberty, property, privileges are sacred and precious things, not to be in the least manner betrayed; yea, in some sense we may look upon them as a fence and mound unto religion itself. Arbitrary government would quickly be tampering in sacred things, because corruption in the church is marvellously subservient and advantageous to corruption in the state. But the most orient pearl of this kingdom is our religion, and the bitterest enemies unto that, are our sins. These are the snuffs that dim our candlestick, and threaten the removal of it; these the leaven that defile our passovers, and urge God to pass away and depart from us; these the obstructions to the happiness of the kingdom. Think seriously what ways may be most effectual to purge this leaven out of the land. The principal sacrificing knife which kills and mortifies sin, is the word of God, and the knowledge of it. It would have been a great unhappiness to the commonwealth of learning, if Caligula had succeeded in his endeavour to deprive the world of the writings of Homer, Virgil, and Livy. But oh what an Egyptian calamity is it, to have in this sun

shine of the gospel, thousands of persons and families (as I doubt not but upon inquiry it would appear) without the writings of the prophets and apostles :— a christian soldier without his sword, a christian builder without his rule and square, a christian calling without the instruments and balances of the sanctuary belonging to it ! O therefore that every parish had an endowment fit for a learned, laborious, and worthy pastor, and pastors worthy of such endowments ! that provision were made that every family might have a bible in it, and (if by law it might possibly be procured) the exercises of religion therewithal ! this would be the surest magazine to secure the happiness of a kingdom : that all reproachful titles, which the devil useth as scarecrows, and whiflers* to keep back company from pressing in upon Christ's kingdom, were by law proscribed ! that scandalous sins were by the awfulness and severity of discipline more blasted and brought to shame ! that the Lord's house were more frequented, and his day more sanctified, and his ordinances more revered, and his ministers, who teach the good knowledge of the Lord, more encouraged than ever heretofore !—in one word, that all the several fountains of the commonwealth were settled in a sound and flourishing constitution ! that in every place we might see piety the elm to every other vine, the supporter to every other profession. Learning adorned with piety, and law administered with piety, and counsels managed with piety, and trade regulated with piety, and the plough followed with piety. That when ministers fight against sin, with the sword of God's word, you who are the nobles and gentry of the land, would second them, and frown upon it too ; a

* Things that are moved by the wind to frighten birds from the corn.

frown of yours may sometimes do as much service to Christ as a sermon of ours. And he cannot but take it very unkindly from you, if you will not bestow your countenance on him, who bestowed his blood on you. That you would let the strictness of your lives, and the piety of your examples put wickedness out of countenance, and make it appear (as indeed it is) a base and a sordid thing.

If we would thus seriously set ourselves against the sins of the land, no power, no malice, no policies should stand between us and God's mercies; religion would flourish, and peace would settle, and trade would revive, and the hearts of men would be reunited, and the church be as a city compacted, and this nation would continue to be as it hath been, like the garden of Eden, a mirror of prosperity and happiness to other people; and God would prevent us in the second part of our petition, with the blessing of goodness: as soon as ever iniquity were removed, he would do us good, which is the second thing here directed to pray for, "Receive us graciously."

In the original it is, Take good, to wit, to bestow upon us; so taking is sometimes used for giving. He received gifts for men, so in the psalm; he gave gifts to men, so in the apostle: and it is not improbable, that the prophet here secretly leads us to Christ the Mediator, who first receiveth gifts from his Father, and then poureth them forth upon his church, Acts ii. 33.

The meaning, then, is, Lord, when thou hast pardoned, weakened, mortified sin, go on with thy mercy, and, being in Christ graciously reconciled unto us, give further evidence of thy fatherly affection, by bestowing portions upon us. They shall not be cast away upon unthankful persons; we will render the

calves of our lips: they shall not be bestowed upon those that need them not, or that know where else to provide themselves. It is true, we have gone to the Assyrian, we have taken our horses instead of our prayers, and gone about to find out good; we have been so foolish as to think that the idols which have been beholden to our hands for any shape that is in them, could be instead of hands, and of God unto us, to help us in our need; but now we know that men of high degree are but a lie, that horses are but a vanity, that an idol is nothing, and therefore can give nothing. That power belongeth unto thee, none else can do it; that mercy belongeth unto thee, none else will do it; therefore since in thee only the fatherless find mercy, be thou pleased to do us good.

We will consider the words, 1. Absolutely, as a single prayer by themselves; 2. Relatively, in their connexion, and with respect to the scope of the place.

1. From the former consideration we observe, that all the good we have is from God; he only must be sought unto for it; we have none in ourselves; "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good," Rom. vii. 18. we can neither think, nor speak, nor do it.

And, missing it in ourselves, it is all in vain to seek for it in things below ourselves. They can provide for our back and belly, and yet not that neither without God: the roots out of which the fruits of the earth do grow, are above in heaven, the genealogy of corn and wine is resolved into God, Hos. ii. 22. But if you go to your lands, or houses, or treasuries for medicine, for a sick soul, or a guilty conscience, they will all return an *ignoramus** to that inquiry; salvation doth not grow in the furrows of the field, neither are

* Confess their inability to answer.

there in the earth to be found any mines or harvests of grace or comfort.

In God alone is the fountain of life ; he that only is good, he only doth good ; when we have wearied ourselves with having recourse to second causes, here at last, like the wandering dove, we must arrive for rest : " Many will say, Who will show us any good ? do thou lift up the light of thy countenance upon us," Psal. iv. 6. From Him alone comes every good gift ; Jam. i. 17. whether temporal, it is his blessing that maketh the creature able to comfort us ; (the woman touched the hem of Christ's garment, but the virtue went not out of the garment, but out of Christ, Luke viii. 44.) or whether spiritual, sanctified faculties, sanctified habits, sanctified motions, glorious relations, in predestination, adoption, and christian liberty, excellent gifts, heavenly comforts, all and only from him, and that without change and alteration. He doth not do good one while, and evil another, but goodness is his proper and native operation ; he is not the author of sin, that entered by the devil ; he is not the author of death, that entered by sin ; but our destruction is of ourselves. And therefore, though the prophet say, Is there any evil in the city which the Lord hath not done ? yet he doth it not but only as it is good in order to his glory : for it is just with God, that they who run from the order of his commands, should fall under the order of his providence, and doing willingly what he forbids, should unwillingly suffer what he threateneth.

In one word, God is the author of all good, by his grace working it ; the permittor of all evil, by his patience enduring it ; the orderer and disposer of both, by his mercy rewarding the one, by his justice revenging

the other, and by his wisdom directing both to the ends of his eternal glory.

This serves to discover the free and sole working of grace in our first conversion, and the continued working of grace in our further sanctification ; whatsoever is good in us habitually, as grace inhering, or actually, as grace working, is from him alone as the author of it. For though it be certain, that when we will and do, we ourselves are agents, yet it is still under and from him. By grace we are that we are, we do what we do in God's service : vessels have no wine, bags have no money in them, but what the merchant putteth in : the bowls of the candlesticks had no oil but that which dropped from the olive branches.

Other things which seek no higher perfection than is to be found within the compass of their own nature, may, by the guidance and activity of the same nature, attain thereunto ; but man aspiring to a divine happiness, can never attain thereunto but by a divine strength : impossible it is for any man to enjoy God without God.

The truth of this point shows it in five gradations.

(1.) By grace, our minds are enlightened to know and believe Him : for spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

(2.) By grace, our hearts are inclined to love and obey Him, for spiritual things are spiritually approved. He only by his almighty and ineffable operation worketh them in us.

(3.) By grace, our lives are enabled to work what our hearts do love, without which, though we should will, yet we cannot perform, any more than the knife which hath a good edge is able actually to cut, till moved by the hand.

(4.) By grace, our good works are carried on unto

perfection. Adam wanting the grace of perseverance, fell from innocence itself. It is not sufficient for us that God prevent* and excite us to will, that he co-operate and assist us to work, except he continually follow and supply us with a residue of the Spirit, to perfect and finish what we set about. All our works are begun, continued, and ended in him.

(5.) By grace our perseverance is crowned : for our best works could not endure the trial of justice, if God should enter into judgment with us. Grace enables us to work, and grace rewards us for working ; grace begins, and grace finishes both our faith and salvation. The work of holiness is nothing but grace, and the reward of holiness is nothing but grace for grace.

Again : this teaches us how to know good from evil in ourselves. What we look on as good, we must see how we have derived it from God ; the more recourse we have had unto God by prayer, and faith, and study of his will, in the procurement of it, the more goodness we shall find in it. A thing done may be good in the substance of the work, and yet evil in the manner of doing it ; as the substance of a vessel may be silver, but the use sordid. Jehu's zeal was rewarded as an act of justice, and it was punished too as an act of policy, for the perverse end. A thing which I see in the night may shine, and that shining proceed from nothing but rottenness. We must not measure ourselves by the matter of things done : for there may be a bad design in a good work. Doeg prays, and Herod hears, and hypocrites fast, and pharisees preach ; but when we would know the goodness of our works, look to the fountain, whether they proceed from the Father of lights by the Spirit of

* Go before.

love, and the grace of Christ, from humble, penitent, filial, heavenly dispositions ; nothing will carry the soul unto God, but that which cometh from him. Our communion with the Father and the Son is the trial of all our goodness.

Further: this should exceedingly abase us in our own eyes, and stain all the pride, and cast down all the plumes of flesh and blood, when we seriously consider that in us, as now degenerated from our original, there is no good to be found : our wine is become water, and our silver dross. As our Saviour saith of the devil, when he lies he speaks of his own, so when we do evil, we work of our own, and, as the apostle speaks, “ according unto man,” 1 Cor. iii. 3. Lusts are our own, our very members to that body of sin which the apostle calleth “ the old man,” with which it is as impossible to do any good, as for a toad to spit cordials.

Men are apt to glory of their good hearts and intentions, only because they cannot search them, Jer. xvii. 9. and being carnal themselves, to entertain none but carnal notions of God’s service. But if they knew the purity and jealousy of God, and their own impotence to answer so holy a will, they would lay their hands upon their mouths, and with Job, abhor themselves ; and with Isaiah, bewail the uncleanness of their lips ; and with Moses, fear and quake, as not being able to endure the things that are commanded ; and with Joshua acknowledge, that they cannot serve God because he is holy. They would then remember that the law of God is a law of fire, Deut. xxxiii. 2. and the tribunal of God, a tribunal of fire, Ezek. i. 27. that the pleadings of God with sinners, are in flames of fire, Isa. lxvi. 15, 16. that the trial of all our works shall be by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 13. that the God before whom we must appear, is a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29

Go now and bring thy straw and stubble, thy drowsy and sluggish devotion, thy fickle and flattering repentance, thy formal and demure services into the fire, to the law to measure them, to the Judge to censure them ; nay, now carry them to thine own conscience, and tell me whether that will not pass the Father's verdict upon them ; that which is fair in thine eye, is filthy in God's.

Lastly: this serves for exhortation unto these particular duties.

[1.] Unto patience and meekness under any evil that God may bring upon us, and that not barely, because he doth us good in other things, which was Job's argument, " Shall we receive good from the Lord, and not evil ? " Job ii. 10. But further, because the very evils that come upon us, are oftentimes by him intended for good, as Joseph told his brethren, Gen. l. 20. We are not angry with the physician when he lances, diets, and restrains us of our will : he denies us our will, that we may have our will ; a sick man is many times most faithfully served, when he is crossed. I lop my trees, bruise my grapes, grind my corn, to fit it to the ends whereunto it tendeth. God's end is merciful when his hand is heavy, as John's roll was " sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly," Rev. x. 9. so troubles may be bitter to the palate, but profitable to the conscience ; like hot spices that bite the tongue, but comfort the stomach.

And as it dictates patience in suffering evil, so in doing our duties, though we suffer contempt and reproaches for it. If we were to receive our rewards from men, their frowns might discourage us ; but when we have done God's will, God himself will be our reward, and make his promises a comfort unto us.

Moses and Aaron, though their whole employments were for the good of Israel, were yet repaid with murmuring and discontent, and the people, like children, repined at the food which their prayers obtained for them, yet nothing dismayed them from their duty. The woman of Canaan prays on when she is denied, and Jacob holds with his hands when his thigh is lamed; our first care must be to be in our way, to be doing our duties, and then, though (as Solomon speaks) we should meet a lion in our way, we must not be dismayed; for angels are stronger than lions, and he hath "given his angels charge over us, to bear us in our ways," Psal. xci. 11. Yea, "whilst we are with him, he himself is with us," 2 Chron. xv. 2. so that the way of the Lord is the surest and safest walk that any man can have, "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright," Prov. x. 29.

[2.] Unto humility. If thou art a vessel of gold, and thy brother but of wood, be not high-minded, it is God that maketh thee to differ; the more bounty God shows, the more humility he requires. Those mines that are richest are deepest, those stars that are highest seem smallest, the goodliest buildings have the lowest foundations; the more God honoureth men, the more they should humble themselves; the more the fruit, the lower the branch on which it grows; pride is ever the companion of emptiness. Oh how full was the apostle, yet how low was his language of himself—"least of saints, last of apostles, chief of sinners, no sufficiency to think, no abilities to do;" all that he is, he is by grace: thus humility teaches us in our operation, to draw strength from God, not from ourselves; in our graces to ascribe their goodness to God, and their weakness to ourselves.

[3.] Unto dependence and continual recourse to God, as the Fountain of all good, to keep an open and unobstructed passage between him and our soul. Say not, I have light enough in my house, I may now shut up my windows, for light within hath dependence upon immediate supplies from the sun without, and so hath grace upon continual supplies from the Sun of righteousness. God teacheth even the husbandman to plough and thresh, Isa. xxviii. 26. In these things his direction is to be implored: meddle not then with great and high affairs without recourse unto him. His name is Counsellor, and his testimonies are counsellors; let them be the rule and square of all your debates. It is recorded for the honour of Scipio, that he went first to the capitol, and then to the senate. But you have more noble examples. David is put to flight, he flies and prays. Hezekiah is at a stand in all his counsels, he sends to the prophet and prays; Jehoshaphat is in great distress, and knows not what in the world to do, but he prays; Nehemiah is sore afraid, and hath a petition to make to the king, but first he makes one to God, and prays; whenever we are in great need, and there is no strength at all in us, all the world cannot furnish you with such another help as prayer, and recourse to God,—it hath delivered even graves of their dead. Therefore let me beseech you, whenever you meet with such difficulties as put you to a stand, that you know not what to advise or resolve upon, go to your closets, prostrate yourselves at His throne, whose honour it is to be seen in the mount, beg counsel of him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let it appear that you seek his face to direct you, and his glory as the supreme end and design of all your consultations; and then try whether he is not a present

help in trouble, and whether he will not magnify the wisdom of his counsel in the perplexity of yours.

[4.] Unto fidelity, in the use of any good which God bestows upon us: for God gives not talents to men, barely to enrich men, but to employ them; therefore as the vessel hath one passage to let the wine into itself, and another to pour it out into the flagon, so we should not only fill ourselves by dependence upon God, but should supply others by love and service unto our brethren.

Right honourable, this nation hath put into your hands all that is outwardly dear unto them, their persons, posterities, liberties, estates. In these sad and woful distractions, they look upon you as binders, and healers, and standers in the gap, and repairers of waste places; God hath called you unto an high and a great trust; and men call upon you, like the man of Macedonia, in St. Paul's vision, Acts xvi. 2. Come and help us. Now in this great strait stir up the graces of God in you, call together all that is within you to call upon his name, improve the uttermost of your interests in him for the state of his church, manage every one of his gifts to the closing of those miserable breaches which threaten an inundation of calamity upon us all; wisdom, and learning, and piety, and prudence, are healing things. Remember (and O that God would put it into the hearts of this whole kingdom, from the throne to the plough, to remember) the fate of a divided kingdom from the mouth of truth itself. O that we would all remember that misunderstandings, and jealousies, and divisions of heart are a high evidence of God's displeasure; and that through the wrath of the Lord of hosts, a land is darkened, and as it were infatuated, when "Manasseh is against Ephraim, and Ephraim

against Manasseh, and every man eateth the flesh of his own arm," Isa. ix. 9. 21. O let us all remember what it cost Shechem and Abimelech, what it cost Benjamin and the other tribes, even the loss of three-score and five thousand men: remember Babylon will clap their hands; no such time for Shishak the Egyptian to trouble Jerusalem, as when Israel is divided, 2 Chron. xii. 2. Let it never be said of God's own people, that they are fallen into the curse of Midianites, and Amorites, and Edomites, and Philistines, to help forward the destruction of one another. O that God would give this whole nation hearts to consider these things; that he would put a spirit of peace and resolved unity into the minds of this whole people, to be true to their own happiness; and by how much the greater are the subtleties of men to divide them, to be so much the more firmly united in prayers to God, and in concord between themselves, that they may not expose their persons, estates, posterity, and (which is dearest of all) their religion, to the crafty and bloody advantages of the enemies of the protestant churches, who in human view could have no way to overthrow them, but by their own dissensions.

2. I shall now conclude all with a very few words of the next point, which is drawn from the scope and connexion of the prayer suggested to the judgment threatened. It is this:

When temporal judgments are felt or feared, God's people should pray for spiritual mercies. Human sorrows cannot overcome where the joy of the Lord is our strength. Thus the Lord seems to have taught his apostle he was under some pressing discomfort, the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him; he prays for particular deliverance, and God answers him, not

according to his wish, but to his real advantage, implying a direction unto all such prayers, "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9. When thou feelest a thorn in thy flesh, pray for grace in thy heart, the buffeting of Satan cannot hurt where the grace of God doth suffice ; so he directeth in time of plague and famine, to pray, and to seek his face, 2 Chron. vii. 14. to look more after his favour than our own ease ; to be more solicitous for the recovering of his love, than for the removing of his rod. This is a true character of a filial disposition. In the way of thy judgments, even in that way wherein wicked men fling thee off, and give thee over, and quarrel with thee, and repine against thee, even in the way of thy judgments do we wait for thee, and the desire of our soul is more to thy name, than to our own deliverance, Isa. xxvi. 8. True disciples follow Christ more for his doctrine than his loaves, and are willing to choose rather affliction than iniquity.

The grace and favour of God is life, Psal. xxx. 5. "better than life," lxiii. 3. and therefore must needs be the most sovereign antidote to preserve, and to bear up the soul above all other discomforts ; whereas if he be angry, no other helps are able to relieve us. Brass and iron can fence me against a bullet, or against a sword, but if I were to be cast into a furnace of fire, it would help to torment me ; if into a pit of water, it would help to sink me. Now our God is a consuming fire, and his breath a stream of brimstone. Human remedies can never cure the wounds which God makes : where he is the smiter, he must be the healer too, Hos. vi. 1. All the candles in a country are not able to make day there, till the sun come : and all the contents of the world are not able to make comfort to the soul, till the Sun of righteousness

arise, with healing in his wings. In a mine, if a damp come, it is in vain to trust to your lights, they will burn blue, and dim, and at last vanish ; you must make haste to be drawn upward if you will be safe. When God sharpeneth an affliction with his displeasure, it is vain to trust to worldly succours, your desires and affections must be on things above, if you will be relieved. There is no remedy, no refuge from God's anger, but in God's grace. Bloodletting is a cure of bleeding, and a burn is a cure against a burn, and running into God is the way to escape him, as to close and get in with him who would strike you, doth avoid the blow. In a tempest at sea, it is very dangerous to strike to the shore, the safest way is to have sea room, and to keep in the main still ; there is no landing against any tempest of God's judgments at any shore of worldly or carnal policies, but the way is to keep with him still ; if he be with us in the ship, the winds and the sea will at last be rebuked.

This then should serve to humble us for our carnal prayers in times of judgments ; such as the hungry raven, or the dry or gaping earth makes, when we assemble ourselves for corn and wine, for peace and safety, and are in the mean time careless whether God receive us graciously or not. God much complains of it, when he slew Israel, the rack made him roar, the rod made him flatter, but all was to be rid of affliction : it was the prayer of nature for ease, not of the spirit for grace, for their " heart was not right," Psal. lxxviii. 34. 37. The like he complains of after the captivity ; they fasted and prayed in the fifth month, wherein the city and temple had been burned, and in the seventh month, wherein Gedaliah had been slain, and the remnant carried captive, but they did it not out of sincerity toward God, but out of policy

for themselves ; and this he proves by their behaviour after their return. If you had indeed sought me, you would have remembered the words of the prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited before, and being returned, would now have put them to practice. But Jerusalem inhabited after the captivity, is too much like Jerusalem inhabited before the captivity ; so that from hence it appears, that all their weeping and separating was not for pious, but politic reasons, Zech. vii. 5, 6. And there is nothing under heaven more hateful, or more reproachful unto God, than to make religion serve turns, to have piety lackey and dance attendance, and be a drudge and groom to private ends, to make it a cloak to policy, a varnish to rotten wood, silver dross to a broken potsherd.

O then, when we weep and separate ourselves, let us not then think to mock God with empty ceremonies of repentance ; let us not assemble ourselves only to flatter away the rod from our back, and to get peace and security to our own persons, and then let the favour of God, the power of his grace, the comforts of his Spirit be unregarded as before ; as if we fasted and prayed only for our backs and bellies, not for our consciences or conversations ; for be we well assured, he who doth not ask the things which he ought, shall not obtain the things which he asks ; such a prayer begs nothing but a denial.

We have now on many fasts prayed for making up our breaches. These prayers we have not found yet return like Noah's dove, with an olive branch, a gracious answer unto us again. What is the reason ? Where is the obstruction ? Is not he a God that heareth prayers ? Is it not his title ? Doth he not glory in it ? Certainly mercies stop not at God, but at us. We are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels—

our own affections. If there come but a little light into a room, the defect is not in the sun, but in the narrowness of the window ; if a vessel fill but slowly, the fault is not any emptiness in the fountain, but the smallness of the pipe. If mercies ripen slowly, or stop at any time in the way, it is not because they are unwilling to come to us, but because we are unfit to enjoy them. Our prayers, doubtless, in many of us, have not been words taken from him, but from our own carnal dictates.

We would fain have things well in our country, but have we hitherto looked after our consciences ? The distractions without us, have they driven us to consider the distempers within, or to desire the things above ? The unsettledness of peace in the kingdom, hath it awakened us to secure our peace with God ? We would fain have better times, but have we yet laboured for better hearts ? We would fain have a right understanding prevail in public matters, but have we yet seriously set about it, to have a more clear and sweet communion between us and our God ? We long to see more good laws, but are we yet come to the care of good lives ? Every one cries out, " Who will show us any good ? " but how few think on the light of God's countenance.

Hence, hence, beloved, is the miscarriage of all our prayers. If we would seek God's kingdom, we are promised other things by way of overplus and accession, as he that buyeth a treasury of jewels hath the cabinet into the bargain. But when we place our kingdom in outward comforts, and let our daily bread shut all the other five petitions out of our prayers, no wonder if the promises of this life, which are annexed unto godliness, do not answer those prayers wherein godliness is neglected. It

were preposterous to begin the building of a house at the roof, and not at the foundation: piety is the foundation of prosperity; if you would have your children like plants and like polished stones, your garners full, your cattle plenteous, no complaining in your streets; if you would have the king happy, and the church happy, and the state happy, and peace and prosperity flourish again; let our chief prayer be, "Lord make us a happy people, by being our God." Give us thyself, thy grace, thy favour, give us renewed hearts and reformed lives; let not our sins confute, and outcry, and belie our prayers, and pray them back again without an answer. And when we seek thee and thy Christ above all, we know that with him thou wilt freely give us all other things. The spiritual good things which we beg, will either remove, or shelter and defend us from the outward evil things which we suffer.

Again: this serves for an instruction unto us, touching a sanctified use of God's judgments or threatenings. When we learn obedience, as Christ did, by the things which we suffer, Heb. v. 8. when we are chastened and taught together, Psal. xciv. 12. when sufferings quicken spiritual desires, and the more troubles we find in our way, the more love we have to our country; when we can say, "all this is come upon us, and yet we have not forgotten thee," Psal. xliv. 17, 18. when we can serve God as well in ploughing and breaking the clods, as in treading out the corn, Hosea x. 11. when, with Jonah, we can delight in him, even in the whale's belly, and suffer not our love of him to be quenched with all the waters of the sea; when we can truly say to him, Lord, love me, and then do what thou wilt unto me,—let me feel thy rod, rather than forfeit thine affection; when we can

look through the anger of his chastisements unto the beauty of his commands ; and to the sweetness of his loving countenance, as by a rainbow we see the beautiful image of the sun's light in the midst of dark and waterish clouds ; when by how much the flesh is the fuller of pain, by so much prayers are fuller of spirit ; by how much the heavier are our earthly sufferings, by so much the stronger are our heavenly desires . when God threateneth punishments, and we pray for grace, this is a sanctified use of God's judgments. And this we should all be exhorted unto in the times of distraction, to make it the principal argument of our prayers, and study of our lives, to obtain spiritual good things ; and the less comfort we find in the world, to be the more importunate for the comforts of God, that by them we may encourage ourselves, as David did in his calamity at Ziklag, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. When the city Shechem was beaten down to the ground, then the men and women fled to the strong tower, and shut that upon them, Judg. ix. 51. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous fly to it, and are safe," Prov. xviii. 10.

Herein we shall more honour God when we set him up in our hearts as our fear and treasure, and mourn more towards him, than for the miseries we feel, and pant more after him, than all the outward contentment which we want.

Herein we shall more exercise repentance, for it is worldly sorrow which droopeth under the pain of the flesh, but godly sorrow is most of all affected with the anger of God.

Herein we shall more prevail with God ; the more heavenly the matters of your prayers are, the more prevalent they must needs be with a heavenly Father ; we have five spiritual petitions unto one for

bread; the more suitable our prayers are to God's will, the more easy access they will have to his ear. The covenant of grace turns precepts into promises, and the Spirit of grace turns precepts and promises into prayers. It is not God's will that we should live without afflictions, but our sanctification is God's will, 1 Thess. iv. 3. The more prayers proceed from love, the more acceptable to the God of love: now prayer against judgments proceeds from fear; but prayer for grace and favour proceeds from love.

Lastly: hereby we shall more benefit ourselves; God's grace is much better than our own ease; it gives us meekness to submit; it gives us strength to bear; it gives us wisdom to benefit by our afflictions.

God's favour is much better than our own ease, and is a recompense for sufferings beyond all their evils. A man would be contented to be loaded with gold, so he might have it for the bearing; though it be heavy, yet it is precious; and God's favour turns affliction into gold. "If he gives quietness, nothing can give trouble," Job xxxiv. 29. and if he keep back his grace and favour, nothing can give peace; neither wealth nor honours, nor pleasures, nor crowns, nor all the world, with the fulness, or rather the emptiness thereof, can do us any good at all. Any thing which will consist with the reign of lust, with the guilt of sin, with the curse of the law, with the wrath of God, with horrors of conscience, and with the damnation of hell, is too base to be called the good of man. "To do judgment, to love mercy, and walk humbly with God, this is the good of man, Micah vi. 8. to fear God, to keep his commandments, this is the whole end and happiness of man, Eccl. xii. 13.

O then get remission and removal of sin, get this good of man, the oil of grace in your lamps,

peace of God in your hearts, the streams of the rivers of God in your consciences ; and then, though the earth be moved, and the mountains shake, and the waters roar, whatever distractions, whatever desolations happen, while ruin overtakes the careless, thou shalt find a chamber in God's providence, a refuge in his promises, a pavilion in the secret of his presence to protect and to comfort thee above them all.

SERMON II.

SO WILL WE RENDER THE CALVES OF OUR LIPS. ASSHUR SHALL NOT SAVE US; WE WILL NOT RIDE UPON HORSES: NEITHER WILL WE SAY ANY MORE TO THE WORK OF OUR HANDS, YE ARE OUR GODS, &c.—HOSEA XIV. 2, 3.

IN the whole context, we have before observed two general parts: Israel's prayer, and Israel's promise. The prayer we have considered, and now proceed unto the promise, wherein are two things to be considered. The covenant itself; and then the ground upon which they make it, God's mercy to the fatherless. The covenant, wherein they promise two things.

First. Thanksgiving for God's hearing and answering their prayers.

Second. A special care for amendment of their lives.

"We will render the calves of our lips." The apostle out of the septuagint reads it, "the fruit of our lips," Heb. xiii. 15. It is the use of the scripture to describe spiritual duties by expressions drawn from ceremonies and usages under the law, as repentance is called washing, Isa. i. 16. and prayer, incense, Psa. cxli. 2. Rev. v. 8. and the righteousness of saints, fine linen, (being an allusion to the garments of the priests,) Rev. xix. 8. and Christ an altar, whereby both our persons and services are sanctified and accepted, Heb. xiii. 10. Rom. xii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 5. Isa. lvi. 7. Thus here, the spiritual sacrifices of praise are called calves, to show the end of all

sacrifices, which were ordained for the stirring up of spiritual affections, and praises unto God, and also to intimate the vanity of ceremonial without real services. The beast on the altar was but a carnal, but the faith of the heart and the confession of the mouth was a reasonable sacrifice. No point more insisted on in the prophets than this, Isa. i. xv. Mich. vi. 6—8. Amos iv. 4. v. 5. Psa. l. 13. 15. lxxix. 30, 31. &c. They had idolatrously dishonoured God with their calves of Dan and Bethel, and they had carnally and superstitiously placed all worship and holiness in the calves of the altar: but now they resolve to worship God neither politically, after human inventions, nor carelessly, with mere outward ceremonies, but spiritually, and from inward affections: for the lips are moved by the heart.

Now thanksgiving is further called the calves, or sacrifices of the lips, to intimate, that after all God's rich mercies upon us in pardoning our sins, and in multiplying his grace and spiritual comforts upon us, we, like beggars, have nothing to return but the bare acknowledgments and praises of our lips; words for wonders, and those words too his own gifts; we cannot render them to him, before we have received them from him, Psa. cxvi. 12, 13. Mat. xii. 34. 1 Chron. xxix. 16.

“Asshur shall not save us.” Unto the general confession of sin intimated in those words, “Take away all iniquity,” here is added a particular detestation of their special sins, with a covenant to forsake them; lest waxing wanton with pardon and grace, they should relapse into them again. The sum is to confess the vanity of carnal confidence, betaking itself to the aid of men, to the strength of horses, to the superstition of idols for safety and deliverance. All which they

are now at last by their experience, and by their repentance, taught to abandon, as things which indeed cannot, and therefore they are resolved shall not save them.

By the Assyrian is here intimated all human succour procured by sinful correspondence, by a synecdoche,* of the part for the whole. But he is particularly mentioned, 1. Because he was the chief monarch of the world, to show, that the greatest worldly succours are vain, when they are relied upon without, or against God; 2. Because the scripture takes notice often of it as their particular sin, the sending unto, relying upon, and paying tribute unto him for aid and assistance, Hos. v. 13. vii. 11, 12. 2 Kings. xv. 19, 20; 3. Because, instead of helping, he did greatly afflict them. Their flying to him was like a bird's flying into a snare, or a fish's avoiding the pole wherewith the water is troubled by swimming into the net, 2 Kings xv. 29. Hos. xiii. 4.

By horses we are to understand the military preparations and provisions which they made for themselves, both at home, and from Egypt, 2 Chron. i. 16. Isa. xxxi. 1.

By the works of their hands are meant their idols, which were beholden to their hands for any shape or beauty that was in them. The same hands which formed them, were afterwards lifted up in worship unto them, Isa. xlv. 10. 17. xlv. 6—8. Jer. x. 3. 15. vi. 20. Acts xix. 26. Time was when we said, "These are our gods which brought us up out of Egypt," Exod. xxxii. 4. 1 Kings xii. 28. but now we will not say so any more; for how can a man be the maker of his Maker.

"For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." This is

* A figure by which part is taken for the whole.

the ground of their petition for pardon and grace, and of their promise of praises and amendment; God's mercy in hearing the prayers, and in enabling the performances of his people. It is a metaphor drawn from orphans in their minority, who are, 1. Destitute of wisdom and abilities to help themselves; 2. Exposed to violence and injuries; 3. Committed for that reason to the care of tutors and guardians to govern and protect them. The church here acknowledgeth herself an outcast, destitute of all wisdom and strength within, of all succour and support from without, and therefore betaketh herself solely unto God's tuition, whose mercy can and useth to help when all other help fails.

This is the last link of that golden chain of repentance made up of these gradations: 1. A humble address unto God; 2. A penitent confession of sin; 3. An earnest petition against it; 4. An imploring of grace and favour; 5. Thanksgiving for such great benefits; 6. A covenant of new obedience; 7. A confidence and quiet repose in God.

Let us now consider what useful observations the words thus opened will afford unto us. And one main point may be collected from the general scope of the place. We see after they have petitioned for pardon and grace, they then stipulate and undertake to perform duties of thankfulness and obedience.

True penitents in their conversion from sin, and humiliation for it, do not only pray unto God for mercy, but do further covenant to express the fruits of those mercies in a thankful and obedient conversation. When first we are admitted into the family and household of God, we enter into a covenant. Therefore circumcision, whereby the children of the Jews were first sealed and separated for God, is called his

covenant, Gen. xvii. 13. because therein God did covenant to own them, and they did in the figure covenant to mortify lust, and to serve him, without which they were in his sight but uncircumcised still. "I will punish," saith the Lord, "all those that are circumcised in uncircumcision," (so the original runs, Jer. ix. 25.) and the nations there mentioned with Judah, who are said to be uncircumcised, did yet use circumcision as the learned have observed, but being out of covenant with God, it is accounted to them as uncircumcision, and so was that of the Jews too when they did break covenant with God, Rom. ii. 28, 29. Acts vii. 51. And as the Gentiles being converted are called Jews, and said to "be born in Sion," Gal. vi. 16. 1 Cor. xii. 2. Psal. lxxxvii. 4, 5. so the Jews living impenitently are called Gentiles, Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Ethiopians, Sodomites; Ezek. xvi. 3. Hos. xii. 7. Amos ix. 7. Isa. i. 10. In like manner baptism among christians is called by the apostle the answer, or covenant of keeping a good conscience towards God, 1 Pet. iii. 21. the word signifieth a question or interrogation, which some would have to be the conscience's making interpellation for itself to God; others to be as much as the examining of a man's self, like that before the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. xi. 28. I rather take it as an allusion to the manner of John's baptism, wherein the people first confessed, and consequently renounced sin, and being taken into Christ's service, or into that kingdom of God which was at hand, did inquire after the work which they were to do. And we find the same word in Luke iii. 10. which the apostle Peter useth, "The people asked him, saying, What shall we do?" whereby is intimated an engaging of themselves by a solemn promise and undertaking, to the practice of that

repentance unto which John baptized them. Whence arose the grave form of the ancient churches, wherein questions were proposed to the person baptized touching his faith and repentance, renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil, with a solemn answer and stipulation obliging thereunto. Which custom seems to have been derived from the practice used in the apostle's time, wherein profession of faith, unfeigned and sincere repentance was made before baptism, Acts ii. 38. viii. 37. xvi. 3. xix. 4. This is the first dedicating of ourselves, and entering into a covenant with God, which we may call in the prophet's expression, the subscribing, or giving man's name to God, Isa. xliv. 5.

Now the covenant between us and God being perpetual, a covenant of salt, Jer. xxxii. 40. 2 Chron. xiii. 5. as we are to begin it in our baptism, so we are to continue it to our life's end, and upon all fit occasions to repeat and renew it for our further quickening and remembrancing unto duties. So did David, Psal. cxix. 106. so Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 20—22. so Asa, and the people in his time, 2 Chron. xv. 12. 15. so Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxix. 10. xxx. 5. 23. so Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31, 32. so Ezra, and Nehemiah, Ezra x. 3. Nehem. ix. 38.

The reasons enforcing this duty may be drawn from several considerations.

I. From God in Christ, where two strong obligations occur, namely, the consideration of his dealing with us, and of our relation unto him. For the former, he is pleased not only to enter into covenant with us, but to bind himself to the performance of what he promiseth. Though whatever he bestows upon us is all matter of mere and most free grace, wherein he is no debtor to us at

all, yet he is pleased to bind himself unto acts of grace. Men love to have all their works of favour free, and to reserve to themselves a power of alteration or revocation, as themselves shall please. But God is pleased that his gifts should take upon them in some sense the condition of debts, and although he can owe nothing to the creature, Rom. xi. 35. Job xxii. 3. xxxv. 7, 8. yet he is contented to be a debtor to his own promise; and having at first in mercy made it, his truth is after engaged to the performance of it, Mic. vii. 20.

Again, his word is established in heaven, with him there is no variableness, nor shadow of change, his promises are not yea and nay, but in Christ, Amen, 2 Cor. i. 20. If he speak a thing, "it shall not fail," Josh. xxi. 45. He spake, and the world was made; his word alone is a foundation and bottom to the being of all his creatures; and yet, notwithstanding the immutable certainty of his promises when they are first uttered, for our sakes he is pleased to bind himself by further ties. Free mercy secured by a covenant, and a firm covenant secured by an oath, Deut. vii. 12. Luke i. 72, 73. Heb. vi. 17, 18. that we, who, like Gideon, are apt to call for sign upon sign, and to stagger and be disheartened, if we have not double security from God; we whose doubting calls for promise upon promise, as our ignorance doth for precept upon precept, may by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, have strong consolation. Now if God, whose gifts are free, bind himself to bestow them by his promise; if God, whose promises are sure, bind himself to perform them by his oath; how much more are we bound to tie ourselves by covenant unto God, to do those things which are our duty to do, unto the doing

whereof we have such infirm principles as are a mutable will, and an unstedfast heart.

For the latter, our relation unto him, we are his, not only by a property founded in his sovereign power and dominion over us, as our Maker, Lord, and Saviour, Psa. c. 3. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. but by a property growing out of our own voluntary consent, whereby we surrender, and yield, and give up ourselves unto God, Rom. vi. 19. 2 Cor. viii. 5. We are not only his people, but his willing people, by the intervention of our own consent, Psa. cx. 3. We give him our hand (as the expression is, 2 Chron. xxx. 8.) which is an allusion to the manner of covenants or engagements, Prov. vi. 1. 17, 18. Ezek. xvii. 18. We offer up ourselves as a free oblation, Rom. xv. 16. and are thereupon called a "kind of first fruits," Jam. i. 18. We are his, as the wife is her husband's, Hos. ii. 19. Ezek. xvi. 8. Now such an interest as this ever presupposeth a contract. As in ancient forms of stipulation there was asking and answering; as in contract of marriage the mutual consent is asked and given, Gen. xxiv. 58. so it is here between God and the soul, the covenant is mutual, Gen. xvii. 2. He promiseth mercy to be our exceeding great reward, and we promise obedience, to be his willing people, and usually according as is the proportion of strength in our faith to believe God's promises of mercy to us, such is also the proportion of care in our obedience to perform our promises of duty unto him.

II. From ourselves. And here covenants are needful in two respects.

1. In regard of the falseness, and deceitfulness of our corrupt hearts in all spiritual duties. The more cunning a sophister is to evade an argument, the more close and pressing we frame it. The more vigilant a prisoner to

make an escape, the stronger guard we keep upon him. Our hearts are exceedingly apt to be false with God. One while they melt into promises and resolutions of obedience, as Pharaoh and Israel did, Psa. lxxviii. 34. 37. and presently forget, and harden again. Lot's wife goes out of Sodom for fear of the judgments, but quickly looks back again, out of love to the place, or some other curiosity and distemper of mind. Saul relents towards David, and quickly after persecutes him again, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. 19. This is the true picture of man's heart, under a strong conviction, or in a pang of devotion, or in time either of sickness, or some pressing affliction, on the rack, in the furnace, under the rod, nothing then but vows of better obedience; all which do oftentimes dry suddenly away like a morning dew, and wither away like Jonah's gourd. Therefore both to acknowledge, and prevent this miserable perfidiousness of such revolting hearts; it is very needful to bind them unto God with renewed covenants, and since they are so apt with Jonah to run away and start aside, to neglect Nineveh, and to flee to Tarshish, necessary it is to find them out, and to bring them home, and as David did, Psal. lvii. 7. to fix and fasten them to their business, that they may not run any more.

2. In regard of the natural sluggishness which is in us unto duty. We are apt to faint and be weary when we meet with any unexpected difficulties in God's service, to esteem the wilderness as bad as Egypt, to sit down, as Hagar did, and cry, to think that half way to heaven is far enough, and almost a christian progress enough, that baking on one side will make the cake good enough, that God will accept of bankrupt payment, a shilling in the pound, part of our hearts and duties for all. We must sometimes venture

to leap the hedge, for there is a lion in the way. Now to correct this torpor, this pusillanimity, and faint-heartedness in God's service, we must bind them on ourselves with renewed covenants, and put to the more strength because of the bluntness of the iron, Eccles. x. 10. A covenant doth, as it were, twist the cords of the law, and double the precept upon the soul. When it is only a precept, then God alone commands it; but when I have made it a promise, then I command it and bind it upon myself. The more feeble our hands and knees are, the more care we should have to bind and strengthen them, that we may lift them up speedily, and keep them straight, Heb. xii. 12, 13. and the way hereunto is to come to David's resolution, "I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress," Psa. xvii. 3. Empty wishings and wouldings will not keep weak faculties together. Broken bones must have strong bands to close them fast again. A crazy piece of building must be cramped with iron bars to keep it from tottering. So if we would indeed cleave to the Lord, we must bring purposes of heart, and strong resolutions to enable us thereunto, Acts xi. 23. Cleaving will call for swearing, Deut. x. 20. As it should be our prayer, so also our purpose, to have hearts "united to fear God's name," Psa. lxxxvi. 11. whence the phrases of preparing, fixing, confirming, establishing, rooting, grounding, and other like, so frequently occurring in the scripture, 2 Chron. xxx. 19. 1 Chron. xxix. 18. Eph. iii. 17. Heb. xiii. 9. Jam. v. 8.

III. From our brethren; that by a holy association and spiritual confederacy in heavenly resolutions, every man's example may quicken his brother, and so duties be performed with more vigour and fervency, and return with the greater blessings. If fire be in

a whole pile of wood, every stick will burn the brighter ; the greenest wood that is will take fire in so general a flame. Men usually have more courage in the body of an army, where concurrent shoutings and encouragements do as it were infuse mutual spirits into one another, than when they are alone by themselves. David rejoiced in but recounting the companies and armies of God's people when they went up to Jerusalem in their solemn feasts, *Psa. lxxxiv. 7.* And therefore most covenants in scripture were general and public, solemnly entered into by a great body of people, as that of Asa, Josiah, and Nehemiah, the forwardness of every man whetting the face of his neighbour, *Prov. xxvii. 17.*

IV. From the multitudes, strength, vigilance, malice, assiduous attempts of our spiritual enemies, which call upon us for the stronger and more united resolutions. For common adversaries usually gain more by our faintness and divisions, than by their own strength. Therefore soldiers use to take an oath of fidelity towards their country and service. And Hannibal's father made him take a solemn oath to maintain perpetual hostility with Rome. Such an oath have all Christ's soldiers taken, and do at the Lord's supper, and in solemn humiliations, virtually renew the same, never to hold intelligence or correspondence with any of his enemies.

The first thing in a christian man's armour mentioned by the apostle, *Eph. vi. 14.* is the girdle, that which binds on all the other armour (for so we read of girding on armour, *Judg. xviii. 11.* *1 Kings xx. 11.*) and that there is truth. Which we may understand either doctrinally, for steadfastness and stability of judgment in the doctrine of Christ, which we profess, not being carried about with every wind

of doctrine, but holding fast the form of sound words, knowing whom we believe, and having certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, Eph. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 12, 13. Luke i. 4. or else morally and practically, for steadfastness of heart in the faithful discharge of those promises which we have made unto God, (for so faithfulness is compared to a girdle, Isa. xi. 5.) whereby we are preserved from shrinking and tergiversation, in times of trial, and in our spiritual warfare. And this faithfulness, the more it is in solemn covenants renewed, the stronger it must needs be, and the better able to bind all our other arms upon us. Christ's enemies will enter into covenants, and combinations against him and his church, Psal. ii. 2. lxiv. 5, 6. lxxxiii. 5. 8. Acts xxiii. 12. Jer. xi. 9. And our own lusts within us, will many times draw from us oaths and obligations to the fulfilling of them, and make them chains of sin contrary to the nature of an oath, 1 Kings xix. 2. Mark vi. 23. How much more careful should we be to bind ourselves unto God, that our resolutions may be the stronger, and more united against so many and confederate enemies!

1. This point serveth for a just reproof of those who are so far from entering into covenant with God, that indeed they make covenants with Satan his greatest enemy, and do in their conversations, as it were, abuse those promises, and blot out that subscription, and tear off that seal of solemn profession, which they had so often set unto the covenant of obedience. Such as those, in the prophet's time, who were "at an agreement with hell and the grave," Isa. xxviii. 15. Every stubborn and presumptuous sinner holds a kind of spiritual compact with the devil. We read of the "serpent and his seed," Gen. iii. 15. of

the "dragon and his soldiers," Rev. xii. 7. of some sinners being of the devil, animated by his principles, and actuated by his will and commands, 1 John iii. 8. 2 Tim. ii. 26. Satan tempting and sinners embracing and admitting the temptation upon the inducements suggested, hath in it the resemblance of a covenant or compact. There are mutual agreements and promises as between master and servant, one requiring work to be done, and the other expecting wages to be paid for the doing of it. As in buying and selling, one bargains to have a commodity, and the other to have a price valuable for it. Thus we read in some places of the service of sin, John viii. 34. Rom. vi. 16. 2 Pet. ii. 19. and in others of the wages belonging unto that service, Heb. xi. 25. 2 Pet. ii. 15. Jude 11. and elsewhere of the covenant, bargain, and sale, for the mutual securing of the service, and of the wages, 1 Kings xxi. 25. Wicked men sell themselves, chaffer and grant away their time, and strength, and wit, and abilities, to be at the will and disposal of Satan, for such profits, pleasures, honours, advantages, as are laid in their way to allure them, and thus do, as it were, with cords bind themselves unto sin, Prov. v. 22. Ahab bought Naboth's vineyard of the devil, and sold himself for the price in that purchase. Balaam against the light of his own conscience, and the many discoveries of God's dislike, never gives over his endeavours of cursing God's people till he had drawn them into a snare by the Midianitish women, and all to this end, that he might at last overtake the wages of iniquity which he ran so greedily after, Numb. xxii. 15. 21, xxiii. 1. 14. 29. xxxi. 16. Mic. vi. 5. Rev. ii. 14. 2 Pet. ii. 15. Jezebel binds herself by an oath unto murder, 1 Kings xix. 2. Judas makes a bargain for his master's

blood, and at once sells a soul, and a Saviour, for so base a price as thirty pieces of silver, Matt. xxvi. 15. Profane Esau makes merchandise of his birth-right, whereunto belonged the inheritance, or double portion, the princely power, and the office of priesthood, the blessing, the excellency, and the government, Gen. xlix, 3. 2 Chron. xxix. 3. all which he parts with for one morsel of meat, Heb. xii. 16. being therein a type of all those profane wretches, who deride the ways of godliness, and promises of salvation, drowning themselves in sensual delights, and esteeming heaven and hell, salvation and perdition but as the vain notions of melancholy men; having no other God but their belly, or their gain, Phil. iii. 19. 1 Tim. vi. 5.

So much monstrous wickedness is there in the hearts of men, that they add spurs and whips unto a horse which of himself rusheth into the battle: when the tide of their own lusts, the stream and current of their own headstrong and impetuous affections do carry them too swiftly before, yet they hoist up sail, and, as it were, spread open their hearts to the winds of temptation, precipitating and urging on their natural lusts by voluntary engagements, tying themselves yet faster to misery than Adam by his fall had tied them, and making themselves not by nature only, but by compact the children of wrath. One makes beforehand a bargain for drunkenness, another contrives a meeting for uncleanness, a third enters into a combination for robbery and cozenage, a fourth makes an oath of revenge and malice; like Ananias and Sapphira, they agree together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, Acts v. 9. Like Samson's foxes, they join together with firebrands to set the souls of one another on fire, as if they had not title enough to hell except they bargained for it anew, and bound them-

selves, as it were, by solemn obligations not to part with it again.

O that every presumptuous sinner who thus sells himself to do wickedly, would seriously consider those sad incumbrances that go along with this his purchase. Those who would have estates to continue in such or such a succession as themselves had preintended, have sometimes charged curses and execrations upon those who should alienate, or go about to alter the property and condition of them. These, many times, are causeless curses, and do not come; but if any man will needs make bargains with Satan, and be buying of the pleasures of sin, he must needs know that there goes a curse from Heaven along with such a purchase, which will make it at the last but a sweet bitter, like John's roll, which was sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly; like Claudius's mushroom, pleasant but poison; that will blast all the pleasures of sin; into such gold as ever brought destruction to the owners of it. It is said of Cn. Seius, that he had a goodly horse which had all the perfections that could be named for stature, feature, colour, strength, limbs, comeliness, belonging to a horse; but withal this misery ever went along with him, that whosoever became owner of him was sure to die an unhappy death. This is the misery that always accompanies the bargain of sin. How pleasant, how profitable, how advantageous soever it may seem to be unto flesh and blood, it hath always calamity in the end, it ever expires in a miserable death. Honey is very sweet, but it turns into the bitterest choler. The valley of Sodom was one of the most delightful places in the world, but is now become a dead and a standing lake. Let the life of a wicked man run on ever so fluently, it hath a Dead Sea at the dead end of it. O then, when thou art making a

covenant with sin, say to thy soul as Boaz said to his kinsman, "At what time thou buyest it, thou must have Ruth the Moabitess with it," Ruth iv. 4, 5. If thou wilt have the pleasures, the rewards, the wages of iniquity, thou must also have the curse and damnation that is entailed upon it; and let thy soul answer which he there doth, No I may not do it, I shall mar and spoil a better inheritance.

2. This may serve for an instruction unto us touching the duties of solemn humiliation and repentance, which is the scope of the prophet's direction in this place. We must not think we have done enough when we have made general acknowledgments and confessions of sin, and begged pardon and grace from God; but we must withal further bind ourselves fast unto God by engagements of new obedience, as holy men in the scripture have done in their more solemn addresses unto God, Neh. ix. 38. Psa. li. 12—15. for without amendment of life, prayers are but howlings and abominations, Hos. vii. 14. Prov. xxviii. 9. No obedience, no audience. A beast will roar when he is beaten; but men when God punisheth should not only cry, but covenant.

Unto the performance whereof, that we may the better apply ourselves, let us a little consider the nature of a religious covenant. A covenant is a mutual stipulation, or a giving and receiving of faith between two parties, whereby they do unanimously agree in one inviolable sentence or resolution. Such a covenant there is between God and true believers; he giving himself as a reward unto them, and they giving themselves as servants unto him; he willing and requiring the service, and they willing and consenting to the reward; he promising to be their God, and they to be his people, Heb. viii. 10. A notable

expression of which joint and mutual stipulation we have, Deut. xxvi. 17—19. “Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice : and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments ; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour ; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken.” Where we have both the mutual expressions of intimate relation one to another, and the mutual engagements unto universal obedience on the one side, and unto high and precious benefits on the other, growing out of that relation. For because God is mine, I am bound to serve him ; and because I am his, he hath bound himself to provide for me. We are not now to consider that part of the covenant which standeth in God’s promise to be our God ; which in general importeth thus much, God’s giving himself in Christ unto us, and together with Christ, all other good things. Benefits relative, in justification from sin, and adoption unto sons. Benefits habitual, a new nature by regeneration, a new heart and life by sanctification, a quiet conscience by peace and comfort. Benefits temporal, in the promises of this life. Benefits eternal, in the glory of the next. Thus is Christ made of God unto us, wisdom in our vocation, converting us unto faith in him ; righteousness in our justification, reconciling us unto his Father ; sanctification in our conformity unto him in grace, and redemption from all evils or enemies which might hate us here, and unto all glory which may fill and everlastingly satisfy us hereafter, 1 Cor. i. 30. But

we are now to consider of the other part of the covenant which concerneth our engagement unto God, wherein we promise both ourselves, and our abilities unto him, to be his people, and to do him service.

(1.) The material cause of this covenant is whatever may be promised unto God; and that consists of two things—our *persons* and our *services*.

Our *persons*, “We are thine,” Isa. lxiii. 19. Giving our own selves to the Lord, 2 Cor. viii. 5. not esteeming ourselves our own, but his that bought us, 1 Cor. vi. 19. and being willing that he who bought us should have the property in us, and the possession of us, and the dominion over us, and the liberty to do what he pleaseth with us. Being contented to be lost to ourselves, that we may be found in him, Phil. iii. 9. If sin or Satan call for our tongue, or heart, or hand, or eye, to answer, These are not mine own, Christ hath bought them, the Lord hath set them apart for himself, Psa. iv. 3. They are “vessels for the master’s use,” 2 Tim. ii. 21. I am but the steward of myself, and may not dispose of my master’s goods without, much less against, his own will and commands.

Our *services*, which are matters of necessity, matters of expediency, and matters of praise. All which may be made the materials of a covenant.

[1.] Matter of duty and necessity. As David by an oath binds himself to keep God’s righteous judgments, Psa. cxix. 106. And the people in Nehemiah’s time enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s law, and to observe and do all his commandments, Neh. x. 29.

[2.] Matter of circumstantial expediency, which in christian wisdom may be conducive unto the main end of a man’s life, or may fit him for any special condition which God calleth him unto. So the Rechabites

promised their father Jonadab, and held that promise obligatory in the sight of God, "not to drink wine, nor to build house," &c. Jer. xxxv. 6, 7. because by that voluntary hardship of life they should be the better fitted to bear that captivity which was to come upon them. Or, because thereby they should the better express the condition of strangers amongst God's people, upon whose outward comforts they would not seem too much to encroach, that it might appear that they did not incorporate with them for mere secular, but for spiritual benefits. It was lawful for Paul to have received wages and rewards for his work in the gospel, as well of the churches of Achaia, as of Macedonia, and others, as he proveth, 1 Cor. ix. 4. 14. yet he seemeth upon the case of expediency, that he might cut off occasion from them that he desired occasion, and might the better promote the gospel, to bind himself by an oath (for so much those words, "the truth of Christ is in me," do impart, as the learned have observed) never to be burdensome in that kind unto those churches, 2 Cor. xi. 7—12. Lawful things, when inexpedient and oppressive, may be forborne by the bond of a covenant.

[3.] Matter of thanksgiving and praises unto God, in which case it was usual to make and to pay vows. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" saith David. "I will take the cup of salvation," as the use of the Jews was in their feasts and sacrifices of thanksgiving, Luke xxii. 17. "I will pay my vows unto the Lord." Whereby it appears that godly men when they prayed for mercies, did likewise by vows and covenants bind themselves to return tribute of praise in some particular kind or other, upon the hearing of their prayers, Psa. cxvi. 12—14. cxxiii. 2, 3. So Jacob did, Gen. xxviii. 22.

And so Jephthah, Judg. xi. 30, 31. and so Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 11. 27, 28. and so Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 20. and so Jonah, ch. ii. 9. So Zaccheus, to testify his thankfulness unto Christ for his conversion, and to testify his thorough mortification of covetousness, which had been his master-sin, did not only out of duty make restitution where he had done wrong, but out of bounty did engage himself to give the half of his goods to the poor, Luke xix. 8.

The formal cause of a covenant is the plighting of our fidelity, and engaging of our truth unto God in that particular, which is the matter of our covenant ; which is done two ways ; either by a simple promise and stipulation, as that of Zaccheus, or in a more solemn way by the intervention of an oath, or curse, or subscription, as that of Nehemiah, and the people there.

(2.) The *efficient* cause is the person entering into the covenant. In whom these things are to concur,

[1.] A clear knowledge, and deliberate weighing of the matter promised, because error, deception, or ignorance, are contrary to the formal notion of that consent, which in every covenant is intrinsical, and necessary thereunto.

[2.] A free and willing concurrence. In every compact there must be freedom of will, and so in every promise. Not but that authority may impose oaths, and those as well promissory as assertory, Gen. xxiv. 3. 1 Kings ii. 42. Ezra x. 3. 5. As Josiah made a covenant, and caused the people to stand unto it, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31, 32. But that the matter of it, though imposed, should be such in the nature of the thing, as that it may be taken in judgment, and righteousness, that so the person may not be hampered in any such hesitancy of conscience as

will not consist with a pious, spontaneous, and voluntary concurrence thereunto.

[3.] A power to make the promise, and bind oneself by it. For a man may have power to make a promise, which is not finally obligatory, but upon supposition. As a woman might for her own part vow, and by that vow was bound up as to herself, but this bond was but conditional, as to efficacy and influence upon the effect, to wit, if her husband heard it, and held his peace, Num. xxx 3. 14.

[4.] A power, having made the promise, to perform it; and this depends upon the nature of the thing, which must be first possible. No man can bind himself to things impossible. And next lawful, in regard either of the necessity, or expediency, or some other allowableness in the thing. For we can do nothing but that which we can do rightfully. Sinful things are in construction of law impossible, and so can induce no obligation. A servant can make no promise to the dishonour or disservice of his master, nor a child or pupil contrary to the will of his parent or guardian, nor a christian to the dishonour or against the will of Christ whom he serves. In every such sinful engagement there is intrinsically deception, the heart is blinded by the deceitfulness of lust, Eph. iv. 18. 22. Heb. iii. 13. 2 Pet. i. 9. 2 Cor. xi. 3. And these things are destructive to the nature of such an action as must be deliberate and spontaneous. Promises of this kind bind to nothing but repentance.

From these considerations we may learn what to judge of the promises which many men make of doing service unto God.

Some join in covenants, as the greatest part of that tumultuous concourse of people, who made an uproar against the apostle, were gathered together, "they

knew not wherefore," Acts xix. 32. they do not understand the things they promise. As if a man should set his hand and seal to an obligation, and not know the contents or condition of it. Such are all ignorant christians, who have often renewed their covenant of new obedience and faith in Christ, and yet know not what the faith of Christ is, or what is the purity and spirituality of that law which they have sworn unto. As the apostle saith of the Jews, "If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," we may say of many of these, if they knew the purity and holiness of those things which they have vowed to keep, they either would not have entered into covenant with God at all, or would be more conscientious and vigilant in their observation of it. It is a sign of a man desperately careless, to run daily into debt, and never so much as remember or consider what he owes. If there were no other obligation to tie men unto the knowledge of God's will, this alone were sufficient, that they have undertaken to serve him, and therefore by their own covenants are bound to know him. For surely many men who have promised repentance from their dead works, if they did indeed consider what that repentance is, and unto what a strict and narrow way of walking it doth confine them, would go nigh, if they durst, to plead an error in the contract, and to profess that they had not thought their obligation had engaged them unto so severe and rigid a service, and so would repent of their repentance. But in this case, ignorance of what a man ought to know, cannot avoid the covenant which he is bound to make, and having made, to keep; but his covenant doth exceedingly aggravate his ignorance.

Also some make many fair promises of obedience, but it is on the rack, and in the furnace, or as children under

the rod. Oh if I might but recover this sickness, or be eased of this affliction, I would then be a new man, and redeem my mispent time. And yet many of these, like Pharaoh, when they have any respite, find out ways to shift and delude their own promises, and, like melted metal taken out of the furnace, return again unto their former hardness. So a good divine observes of the people of this land in the time of the great sweat in king Edward's days, (I wish we could find even so much in these days of calamity which we are fallen unto,) as long as the heat of the plague lasted, there was crying out, Mercy, good Lord, mercy, mercy. Then lords, and ladies, and people of the best sort, cried out to the ministers, For God's sake tell us what shall we do to avoid the wrath of God. Take these bags, pay so much to such a one whom I deceived, so much restore unto another whom in bargaining I overreached, give so much to the poor, so much to pious uses, &c. But after the sickness was over, they were just the same men as they were before. Thus in time of trouble men are apt to make many prayers, and covenants, to cry unto God, "Arise and save us," Jer. ii. 27. "Deliver us this time," Judg. x. 15. they inquire early after God, and flatter him with their lips, and own him as their God, and rock of salvation, and presently start aside like a deceitful bow. As Austin notes, that in times of calamity the very heathen would flock unto the christian churches to be safe amongst them. And when the Lord sent lions amongst the Samaritans, then they sent to inquire after the "manner of his worship," 2 Kings xvii. 25, 26. Thus many men's covenants are founded only in terrors of conscience. They throw out their sins as a merchant at sea his rich commodities in a tempest, but in a calm wish for

them again. Neither do they throw away the property over them, but only the dangerous possession of them. This is not a full, cheerful, and voluntary action, but only a languid and inconstant willing contrary to that largeness of heart, and fixed disposition which Christ's own people bring unto his service, as David and the nobles of Israel offered willingly, and with joy unto the Lord, 1 Chron. xxix. 17.

Since a covenant presupposeth a power in him that maketh it, both over his own will, and over the matter, thing, or action which he promiseth, so far as to be enabled to make the promise; and since we of ourselves have neither will nor deed, nor sufficiency either to think or to perform, Rom. vii. 18. 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. ii. 12. we hence learn in all the covenants which we make, not to do it in any confidence of our own strength, or upon any dependence on our own hearts, which are false and deceitful, and may, after a confident undertaking, use us as Peter's used him; but still to have our eyes on the aid and help of God's grace, to use our covenants as means the better to stir up God's graces in us, and our prayer unto him for further supplies of it. As David, "I will keep thy statutes," but then, "do not thou forsake me," Psa. cxix. 8. Our promises of duty must ever be supported by God's promises of grace, when we have undertaken to serve him, we must remember to pray as Hezekiah did, "Lord, I am weak, do thou undertake for me," Isa. xxxviii. 14. Our good works cannot come out of us, till God do first of all "work them in us," Isa. xxvi. 12. He must perform his promises of grace to us, before we can ours of service unto him. Nothing of ours can go to heaven, except we first received it from Heaven. We are able to "do nothing but in and by Christ which strengtheneth us,"

John xv. 5. Phil. iv. 13. So that every religious covenant which we make, hath indeed a double obligation in it: an obligation to the duty promised, that we may stir up ourselves to perform it; and an obligation unto prayer, and recourse to God that he would furnish us with grace to perform it: as he that hath bound himself to pay a debt, and hath no money of his own to do it, is constrained to betake himself unto supplications, that he may procure the money of some other friend.

The final cause of a covenant is to induce an obligation where was none before, or else to double and strengthen it where was one before, to be a bond to preserve truth and fidelity. Being subject unto many temptations, and having backsliding and revolting hearts, apt, if they be not kept up to service, to draw back from it, therefore we use ourselves as men do cowardly soldiers,—set them there where they must fight, and shall not be able to run away, or fall off from service.

3. This should serve to humble us upon a twofold consideration.

(1.) For the falseness and unstedfastness of our hearts, which want such covenants to bind them, and as it were fasten them to the altar with cords: as men put locks and fetters upon wild horses, whom otherwise no inclosure would shut in. Our hearts, as Jacob said of Reuben, Gen. xlix. 4. are unstable as water. Moist bodies (as water is) do not set bounds to themselves, as solid and compact bodies do, but shed all abroad, if left to themselves; the way to keep them united, and together, is to put them into a close vessel; so the heart of man can set itself no bounds, but falls all asunder, and out of frame, if it be not fastened and bound together by such strong resolutions.

Sometimes men, either by the power of the word, or by the sharpness of some afflictions, are quickened and inflamed unto pious purposes, like green wood which blazeth while the bellows are blowing ; and now they think they have their hearts sure, and shall continue them in a good frame, to-morrow shall be as this day. But presently, like an instrument in change of weather, they are out of tune again, and, like the chameleon, presently change colour, and as Chrysostom saith, the preacher, of all workmen, seldom finds his work as he left it. Nothing but the grace of God doth balance and establish the heart, and holy covenants are an ordinance or means which he hath pleased to sanctify unto this purpose, that by them, as instruments, grace as the principal cause might keep the heart stedfast in duty. If then Isaiah bewail the uncleanness of his lips, and Job suspect the uncleanness and wandering of his eyes, what reason have we to be humbled for this unstedfastness of our hearts, from whence the diffidence and looseness of every other faculty proceeds.

(2.) If we must bewail the falseness of our hearts that stand in need of covenants, how much more should we bewail their perfidiousness in the violation of covenants ! That they take occasion, even by restraint, like a river that is stopped in his course, to grow more unruly. Or, as a man after an ague, which took away his stomach, to return with stronger appetite unto sin again. To crucify our sins, and in repentance to put them, as it were, to shame, and then to take them down from the cross again, and fetch them to life, and repent of repentance. To vow, and “after vows to make inquiry,” Prov. xx. 25. This is a very ill requital unto Christ. He came from glory to suffer for us, and here met with many

discouragements, not only from enemies, but from friends and disciples : Judas betrays him, Peter denies him, his disciples sleep, his kinsfolks stand afar off, yet he doth not look back from a cross to a crown ; and though he be tempted to come down from the cross, yet he stays it out, that he might love, and save us to the uttermost ; but we no sooner out of Egypt and Sodom, but we have hankering affections to return, at the least to look backwards again. We engage ourselves to be ruled by the word of the Lord, as the Jews did, Jer. xlii. 5, 6. and with them, Jer. xliii. 2. when we know his word, cavil against it, and shrink away from our own resolutions. O how should this humble us, and make us vile in our own eyes ! God is exceedingly angry with the breach of but human covenants, Jer. xxxiv. 18. Ezek. xvii. 18. how much more with the breach of holy covenants between himself and us ! and threateneth severely to revenge the quarrel of his covenant, Lev. vi. 25. and so doubtless he now doth, and will do still, except we take a penitent revenge upon ourselves for it. And therefore,

4. Having entered into covenant we should use double diligence in our performance of it, quickening and stirring up ourselves thereunto.

(1.) By the consideration of the stability of his covenant with us, even the " sure mercies of David," Isa. liv. 8, 9. lv. 3. To break faith with a false person were a fault, but to deceive Him that never fails nor forsakes us, increaseth both the guilt and the unkindness.

(2.) By consideration of his continued and renewed mercies. If he were a wilderness unto us, there might be some colour to make us repent of our bargain, and to look out for a better service. But it

is not only unthankfulness, but folly to make a forfeiture of mercies, and to put God by our breach of covenant with him, to break his with us too, Jer. ii. 5—7. 31. Numb. xiv. 34.

(3.) By consideration of our baptism and the tenour thereof, wherein we solemnly promise to keep a good conscience, and to “observe all things whatsoever Christ commandeth us,” 1 Pet. iii. 21. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. from which engagement we cannot recede without the note and infamy of greater perfidiousness. To take Christ’s pay, and do sin service, to be a subject unto Michael, and a pensioner unto the dragon, to wear the livery of one master, and do the work of another; to be an Israelite in title, and a Samaritan in truth, this is either to forget or to deride our baptism, 2 Pet. i. 9. for therein we did, as it were, subscribe our names, and list ourselves in the register of Sion; and as it is a high honour to be enrolled in the genealogies of the church, so it is a great dishonour to be expunged from thence, and to be written in the earth, and have our names with our bodies putrify in perpetual oblivion, Jer. xvii. 13. Neh. vii. 64, 65.

(4.) Consider the seal and witnesses whereby this covenant hath been confirmed. Sealed in our own consciences by the seal of faith, believing the holiness of God’s ways, and the excellency of his rewards, for “he that believeth hath set to his seal,” John iii. 33. mutually attested by our spirits, feeling the sweetness of duty, and by God’s Spirit revealing the certainty of reward, Rom. i. 16. and this in the presence of angels and saints, into whose communion we are admitted, 1 Cor. xi. 10. Heb. xii. 22. so that we cannot depart from this covenant, without shaming ourselves to God, to angels, to men, and to our own consciences. Yea, the font where we were baptized, and the table where

we have sacramentally eaten and drank the body and blood of Christ, and the very seats where we have sat attending unto his voice, like Joshua's stone, ch. xxii. 24. 27. will be witnesses against us if we deny our covenant, though there be no need of witnesses against those who have to do with the Searcher of hearts, and the Judge of consciences, that consuming fire whom no lead, no dross, no reprobate silver, no false metal, can endure or deceive, no Ananias or Sapphira lie unto, without their own undoing.

Lastly, let us consider the estate which these covenants do refer unto, and our tenure whereunto these services are annexed, which is eternal life. After we have had patience to keep our short promises of doing God's will, he will perform his eternal promises of giving himself unto us. And who would forfeit an inheritance for not payment of a small homage or quit-rent reserved upon it? If we expect eternal life from him, there is great reason we should dedicate a mortal life unto him. Let us not pay our service in dross, when we expect our wages in gold.

SERMON III.

SO WILL WE RENDER THE CALVES OF OUR LIPS. ASSHUR SHALL NOT SAVE US; WE WILL NOT RIDE UPON HORSES: NEITHER WILL WE SAY ANY MORE TO THE WORKS OF OUR HANDS, YE ARE OUR GODS, &c.—HOSEA XIV. 2, 3.

HAVING handled the general doctrine of our entering into covenant with God, I shall now proceed unto the particulars which they here engage themselves unto, whereof the first is a solemn thanksgiving; "We will render the calves of our lips." All the sacrifices of the Jews were of two sorts. Some were ilastical, propitiatory, or expiatory, for pardon of sin, or imputation of favour: others were eucharistical sacrifices of praise (as the peace-offerings, Lev. vii. 12.) for mercies obtained, Psal. cvii. 22. With relation unto these, the church here, having prayed for forgiveness of sin, and for the obtaining of blessings, doth hereupon, for the farther enforcement of those petitions, promise to offer the peace-offerings of praise, not in the naked and empty ceremony, but with the spiritual life and substance, namely, the calves of their lips, which are moved by the inward principles of hearty sincerity and thanksgiving.

From hence we learn, that sound conversion and repentance enlargeth the heart in thankfulness towards God, and disposeth it to offer up the sacrifice of praise. And this duty here promised, cometh in

this place under several considerations, for we may consider it,

I. As the matter of a covenant or compact, which we promise to render unto God in acknowledgment of his great mercy in answering the prayers which we put up unto him for pardon and grace. It is observable that most of those psalms wherein David imploreth help from God, are closed with thanksgiving unto him, as Psa. vii. 17. xiii. 6. lvi. 12, 13. lvii. 7—11. &c. David thus by a holy commerce insinuating into God's favour, and driving a trade between earth and heaven, receiving and returning, importing one commodity, and transporting another, letting God know that his mercies shall not be lost, that as he bestows the comforts of them upon him, so he would return the praises of them unto Heaven again. Those countries that have rich and staple commodities to exchange and return unto others, have usually the freest and fullest traffic and resort of trade made unto them. Now there is no such rich return from earth to heaven as praise. This is indeed the only tribute we can pay unto God, to value, and to celebrate his goodness towards us. As in the flux and reflux of the sea; the water that in the one comes from the sea unto the shore, doth in the other but run back into itself again: so praises are as it were the return of mercies unto themselves, or into that bosom and fountain of God's love from whence they flowed. And therefore the richer any heart is in praises, the more speedy and copious are the returns of mercy unto it. God hath so ordered the creatures amongst themselves, that there is a kind of natural confederacy and mutual negotiation amongst them, each one receiving and returning, deriving unto others, and drawing from others what serves most for the conservation of them

all, and every thing by various interchanges and vicissitudes flowing back into the original from whence it came: thereby teaching the souls of men to maintain the like spiritual commerce and confederacy with Heaven, to have all the passages between them and it open and unobstructed, that the mercies which they receive from thence, may not be kept under, and imprisoned in unthankfulness, but may have a free way in daily praises to return to their fountain again. Thus Noah, after his deliverance from the flood, built an altar, on which to sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving; that as his family by the ark was preserved from perishing, so the memory of so great a mercy might in like manner by the altar be preserved too, Gen. viii. 20. So Abraham, after a weary journey being comforted with God's gracious appearing and manifestation of himself unto him, built an altar, and "called on the name of the Lord," Gen. xii. 7. and after another journey out of Egypt, was not forgetful to return unto that place again, Gen. xiii. 4. God's presence drawing forth his praises, as the return of the sun in spring and summer, causeth the earth to thrust forth her fruits and flowers, that they may as it were meet and do homage to the fountain of their beauty. If Hezekiah may be delivered from death, Isa. xxxviii. 20. if David from guilt, Psal. li. 14. they promise to sing aloud of so great a mercy, and to take others into the concert, "I will teach transgressors thy way: and we will sing upon the stringed instruments." Guilt stops the mouth, and makes it speechless, Matt. xxii. 12. that it cannot answer for one of a thousand sins, nor acknowledge one of a thousand mercies. When Jacob begged God's blessing on him in his journey, he vowed a vow of obedience and thankfulness to the Lord, seconding God's promises

of mercy, with his promises of praise, and answering all the parts thereof, "If God will be with me, and keep me, I will be his, and he shall be mine. If he single out me and my seed, to set us up as marks for his angels to descend unto with protection and mercy, and will indeed give this land to us, and return me unto my father's house; then this stone which I have set up for a pillar and monument, shall be God's house, for me and my seed to praise him in;" and accordingly we find he built an altar there, and changed the name of that place, calling it the house of God, and God, the God of Bethel. And lastly, "If God indeed will not leave nor forsake me, but will give so rich a land as this unto me, I will surely return a homage back, and of his own, I will give the tenth unto him again." So punctual is this holy man to stipulate for each distinct promise a distinct praise, and to take the quality of his vows, from the quality of God's mercies, Gen. xxviii. 20. 22. compared with verses 13. 15. Gen. xxxv. 6, 7. 14, 15. Lastly, Jonah out of the belly of hell cries unto God, and voweth a vow unto him, that he would sacrifice with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell all ages, that salvation is of the Lord, Jonah ii. 9. Thus we may consider praises as the matter of the church's covenant.

II. As a fruit of true repentance, and deliverance from sin. When sin is taken away, when grace is obtained, then indeed is a man in a right disposition to give praises unto God. When we are brought out of a wilderness into Canaan, Deut. viii. 10. out of Babylon unto Sion, Jer. xxx. 18, 19. then saith the prophet, "Out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry," &c. When Israel had passed through the Red Sea, and saw the Egyptians dead on the shore, the great type of our

deliverance from sin, death, and Satan, then they sing that triumphant song, Moses and the men singing the song, and Miriam and the women answering them, and repeating over again the burden of the song, "Sing to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea," Exod. xv. 1. 20, 21. When a poor soul hath been with Jonah in the midst of the seas, compassed with the floods, closed in with the depths, brought down to the bottom of the mountains, wrapt about head and heart, and all over with the weeds, and locked up with the bars of sin and death, when it hath felt the weight of a guilty conscience, and been terrified with the fearful expectation of an approaching curse, lying as it were at the pit's brink, within the smoke of hell; within the smell of that brimstone, and scorplings of that unquenchable fire which is kindled for the devil and his angels: and is then by a more bottomless and unsearchable mercy brought unto dry land, snatched as a brand out of the fire, translated unto a glorious condition, from a law to a gospel, from a curse to a crown, from damnation to an inheritance, from a slave to a son; then, then only, never till then, is that soul in a fit disposition to sing praises unto God, when God hath forgiven all a man's iniquities, and healed all the diseases of his soul, and redeemed his life from destruction, or from hell, as the Chaldee rendereth it, and crowned him with loving-kindness and tender mercies, turning away his anger, and revealing those mercies which are from everlasting in election unto everlasting in salvation, removing his sins from him as far as the east is from the west; then a man will call upon his soul over and over again, and summon every faculty within him, and invite every creature without him to bless the Lord,

and to utter praises unto his holy name, *Psa. ciii. 1. 4. 20. 22.* And as David there begins the psalm, with "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and ends it with "Bless the Lord, O my soul:" so the apostle, making mention of the like mercy of God unto him, and of the exceeding abundant grace of Christ, in setting forth him who was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, as a pattern unto all that should believe on him unto eternal life, begins his meditation with praises, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord;" and ends it with praises, "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen," *1 Tim. i. 12. 17.* It is impossible that soul should be truly thankful unto God, which hath no apprehensions of him, but as an enemy, ready to call in, or at the least to curse all those outward benefits which in that little interim and respite of time between the curse pronounced in the law, and executed in death, he vouchsafeth to bestow. And impenitent sinners can have no true notion of God but such. And therefore all the verbal thanks which such men seem to render unto God for blessings, are but like the music of a funeral, or the trumpet before a judge, which gives no comfortable sound to the mourning wife, or to the guilty prisoner.

III. As an argument and motive to prevail with God in prayer. For the church here prays for pardon, for grace, for healing, not only with an eye to its own benefit, but unto God's honour. Lord, when thou hast heard and answered us, then shall we glorify thee, *Psa. l. 15.* "I shall praise thee," saith David, "for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation," *Psa. cxviii. 21.* It is true, if God condemn us, he will therein show forth his own glory, *2 Thess. i. 9.* as he did upon Pharaoh, *Rom. ix. 17.* In which

sense the strong and terrible ones are said to glorify him, Isa. xxv. 3. Because his power in their destruction is made the more conspicuous. But we should not therein concur unto the glorifying of him. "The grave cannot praise him; they that go down into the pit cannot celebrate his name," Psal. xxx. 9. lxxxviii. 10, 11. "The living, the living, they shall praise thee," Isa. xxxviii. 19. This is a frequent argument with David whereby to prevail for mercy, because else God would lose the praise which by this means he should render to his name, Psal. vi. 4, 5. cxviii. 17, &c. God indeed is all-sufficient to himself, and no goodness of ours can extend unto him, Job xxii. 2. xxxv. 7. Yet as parents delight to use the labour of their children in things which are no way beneficial unto themselves; so God is pleased to use us as instruments for setting forth his glory, though his glory stand in no need of us, though we cannot add one cubit thereunto. He hath made all men unto the uses of his unsearchable counsels. "He hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. Yet he is pleased to esteem some men meet for uses which others are not, 2 Tim. ii. 21. and to set apart some for himself, and for those uses, Psal. iv. 3. Isa. xliii. 21. God by his wisdom ordereth, and draweth the blind and brute motions of the worst creatures unto his own honour, as the huntsman does the rage of the dog to his pleasure, or the mariner the blowing of the wind unto his voyage, or the artist the heat of the fire unto his work, or the physician the blood-thirstiness of the leech unto a cure. But godly men are fitted to bring actually glory unto him, to glorify him doingly, 1 Cor. x. 30, 31. Eph. i. 11, 12. And this is that which God chiefly takes pleasure in.

Our Saviour bids his disciples cast their net into the sea, and when they had drawn their net, he bids them bring of the fish which they had then caught; and yet we find that there was a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread provided on the land before, John xxi. 6. 9, 10: thereby teaching us that he did not use their industry for any need that he had of it, but because he would honour them so far as to let them honour him with their obedience. And therefore even then when God tells his people that he needed not their services, yet he calls upon them for thanksgiving, Psa. l. 9. 14.

This then is a strong argument to be used in prayer for pardon, for grace, for any spiritual mercy: Lord, if I perish, I shall not praise thee, I shall not be meet for my Master's uses. Thy glory will only be forced out of me with blows, like fire out of a flint, or water out of a rock. But thou delightest to see thy poor servants operate towards thy glory, to see them not forced by power, but by love to show forth thy praises. And this we shall never do till sin be pardoned. God can bring light out of light, as the light of the stars out of the light of the sun, and he can bring light out of darkness, as he did at first: but in the one case there is a meetness for such a use, in the other not. Now we are not meet subjects for God to reap honour from, till sin be pardoned, till grace be conferred. Then we shall give him the praise of his mercy in pitying such grievous sinners, and the praise of his power and wisdom in healing such mortal diseases, and the praise of his glorious and free grace, in sending salvation to those that did not inquire after it, and the praise of his patience in forbearing us so long, and waiting that he might be gracious, and the praise of his wonderful providence in causing all things to work

together for our good, and the praise of his justice by taking part with him against our own sins, and joining with his grace to revenge the blood of Christ upon them. A potsherd is good enough to hold fire, but nothing but a sound and pure vessel is meet to put wine or any rich deposit into.

IV. As a principle of emendation of life, and of new obedience. Lord take away iniquity, and receive us into favour, then will we be thankful unto thee, and that shall produce amendment of life; "Asshur shall not save us, neither will we ride upon horses," &c. A thankful apprehension of the goodness of God in forgiving, giving, saving, honouring us, is one of the principal foundations of sincere obedience. Then the soul will think nothing too good for God, who hath showed himself so good unto it. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits," saith the prophet David, *Psa. cxvi. 12.* and a little after it follows, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid;" that is, a home-born servant, thine from my mother's womb. It is an allusion to those who were born of servants in the house of their masters, and so were in a condition of servants. If the mother be a handmaid, the child is a servant too, and so the scripture calleth them children of the house, *Gen. xiv. 14. xv. 3. xvii. 12. Lev. xxii. 11. Ecc. ii. 6.* His heart being enlarged in thankfulness, presently reminded him of the deep engagements that did bind him unto service even from the womb. True filial and evangelical obedience ariseth from faith and love. Faith shows us God's love to us, and thereby worketh in us a reciprocal love unto him; "We love him, because he first loved us," *1 John iv. 19.* This is the only thing wherein a servant of God may answer him, and may, as Bernard speaks, return back unto

God what he gives unto him. If he be angry with me, I must not be angry again with him, but fear and tremble, and beg for pardon. If he reprove me, I must not reprove but justify him: if he judge me, I must not judge but adore him. But if he love me, I must take the boldness to love him again, for therefore he loves that he may be loved. And this love of ours unto Christ makes us ready to do every thing which he requires of us, because we know that he hath done much more for us than he requireth of us. "The love of Christ," saith the apostle, "constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead;" that is, either dead in and with him in regard of the guilt and punishment of sin, so as to be freed from the damnation of it, or "dead by way of conformity unto his death," in dying unto sin, and crucifying the old man, so as to shake off the power and strength of it. And the fruit of all, both in dying and in loving, is this, "That we should not live unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us and rose again." Thus love argues from the greater to the less, from the greatness of his work for us, to the smallness of ours unto him. If he died to give us life, then we must live to do him service.

Fear produceth servile and unwilling performances, as those fruits which grow in winter, or in cold countries, are sour, unsavoury, and unripened; but those which grow in summer, or in hotter countries, by the warmth and influence of the sun, are sweet and wholesome: such is the difference between those fruits of obedience which fear and which love produce. The most formal principle of obedience is love, and the first beginnings of love in us unto God arise from his mercies unto us being thankfully remembered; and this teacheth the soul thus to argue; "God hath

given deliverances unto me, and should I break his commandments?" Ezra xiii. 14. Christ gave himself to redeem me from all iniquity, and to make me in a special manner his own, therefore I must be "zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14, therefore I must "show forth the virtues of him that called me out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. No more frequent, more copious common place in all the scriptures than this to call for obedience, and to aggravate disobedience by the consideration of the great things that God hath done for us, Deut. xiii. 20, 21. xi. 7, 8. xxix. xxxii. 6, 7. Josh. xxiv. 2—14. 1 Sam. xii. 24. Isa. i. 2. Jer. ii. 5, 6. Hos. ii. 8. Mic. vi. 3. 5. In the law a ransomed man became the servant of him that bought and delivered him: and upon this argument the apostle calls for obedience; "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. We have but the use of ourselves, the property is his, and we may do nothing to violate that.

V. As a means and instrument of publishing God's praises. There is an emphasis in the word "lips." Sometimes it is a diminutive word, taking away from the duty performed, as Matt. xv. 8. "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." But here it is an augmentative word, that enlargeth the duty, and makes it wider. "I will sacrifice unto thee," saith Jonah, "with the voice of thanksgiving," Jonah ii. 9. God regardeth not the sacrifice, if this be not the use that is made of it; to publish and celebrate the glory of his name. The outward ceremony is nothing without the thankfulness of the heart, and the thankfulness of the heart is too little, except it have a voice to proclaim it abroad, that others may learn

to glorify and admire the works of the Lord too. It is not enough to sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, except withal we “declare his works with rejoicing,” Psa. cvii. 22. There is a private thankfulness of the soul within itself, when, meditating on the goodness of God, it doth in secret return the tribute of an humble and obedient heart back again unto him, which is to praise God on the bed; and there is public thanksgiving, when men “tell of the wondrous works of God in the congregation of his saints,” Psa. cxlii. 5. xxvi. 7. 12. Now here the church promiseth this public thanksgiving, it shall not be the thankfulness of the heart only, but of the lips too. As it is noted of the thankful leper, that “with a loud voice he glorified God,” Luke xvii. 15. “The living, the living shall praise thee,” saith Hezekiah; but how shall they do it? “The father to the children shall make known thy truth,” Isa. xxxviii. 19. There are some affections and motions of the heart that do stop the mouth, are of a cold, stupifying, and constraining nature, as the sap stays and hides itself in the root while it is winter. Such is fear and extremity of grief. “Come,” saith the prophet, “let us enter into the fenced cities, and let us be silent there, for the Lord our God hath put us to silence,” Jer. viii. 14. Other affections open the mouth, are of an expansive and dilating nature, know not how to be straitened or suppressed, and of all these, joy, and sense of God’s mercy, can least contain itself in the compass of our narrow breast, but will spread and communicate itself to others. A godly heart is in this like unto those flowers which shut when the sun sets, when the night comes, and open again when the sun returns and shines upon them. If God withdraw his favour, and send a night of affliction, they shut up

themselves and their thoughts in silence; but if he shine again, and shed abroad the light and sense of his love upon them, then their heart and mouth is wide open towards heaven in lifting up praises unto him. Hannah prayed silently so long as she was in bitterness of soul and of a sorrowful spirit, 1 Sam. i. 12. 15. but as soon as God answered her prayers, and filled her heart with joy in him, presently her mouth was enlarged into a song of thanksgiving, ch. ii. 1.

There is no phrase more usual in the Psalms, than to sing forth praises unto God, and it is not used without a special emphasis. For it is one thing to praise, and another to sing praises, Psa. cxlvi. 2. This is, to publish, to declare, to speak of, abundantly to utter the memory of God's great goodness, that one generation may derive praises unto another, as the expressions are, Psa. cxlv. 4. 7. And therefore we find in the most solemn thanksgivings, that the people of God were wont in great companies, and with musical instruments to sound forth the praises of God, and to cause their joy to be heard afar off, Neh. xii. 27. 31. 43. Isa. xii. 4—6. Jer. xxxi. 7. This then is the force of the expression, Lord, when thou hast taken away iniquity, and extended thy grace and favour to us, we will not only have thankful hearts, every man to praise thee by himself; but we will have thankful lips to show forth thy praise, we will stir up and encourage one another, we will tell our children, that the generations to come may know the mercy of our God.

This is a great part of the communion of saints, to join together in God's praises. There is a communion of sinners, wherein they combine together to dishonour God, and encourage one another in evil,

Psa. lxiv. 5. lxxxiii. 5. 8. Prov. i. 10, 11. Eve was no sooner caught herself, than she became a kind of serpent to deceive and to catch her husband. A tempter had no sooner made a sinner, than that sinner became a tempter. As therefore God's enemies hold communion to dishonour him; so great reason there is that his servants should hold communion to praise him, and to animate and hearten one another unto duty, as men that draw at an anchor, and soldiers that set upon a service use to do with mutual encouragements, **Isa. ii. 3. Zec. viii. 21. Mal. iii. 16.** The holy oil for the sanctuary was made of many spices, compounded by the art of the perfumer, **Exod. xxx. 23—25.** to note unto us that those duties are sweetest which are made up in a communion of saints, each one contributing his influence and furtherance unto them: as in winds and rivers where many meet in one they are strongest; and in chains and jewels where many links and stones are joined in one, they are richest. All good is diffusive, like leaven in a lump, like sap in a root; it will find the way from the heart to every faculty of soul and body, and from thence to the ears and hearts of others. Every living creature was made with the seed of life in it; to preserve itself by multiplying, **Gen. i. 11, 12.** And of all seeds, that of the Spirit, and the word, **1 John iii. 9. 1 Pet. i. 23.** is most vigorous, and in nothing so much as in glorifying God, when the joy of the Lord, which is our strength, doth put itself forth to derive the praises of his name, and to call in others to the celebration of them.

From all which we learn,

1. By what means (amongst many others) to try the truth of our conversions; namely, by the life and workings of true thankfulness unto God for pardon of

sin, and accepting into favour. Certainly when a man is converted himself, his heart will be enlarged, and his mouth will be filled with the praises of the Lord, he will acquaint others what a good God he is turned unto. If he have found Christ himself, as Andrew and Philip, and the woman of Samaria did, he will presently report it to others, and invite them to come and see, John i. 41. 46. iv. 29. If Zaccheus be converted, he receiveth Christ joyfully, Luke xix. 6. If Matthew be converted, he entertains him with a feast, Luke v. 29. If Cornelius be instructed in the knowledge of him, he will call his kinsfolk and friends to partake of such a banquet, Acts x. 24. If David be converted himself, he will endeavour that other sinners may be converted too, Psal. li. 13. and will show them what the Lord hath done for his soul. The turning of a sinner from evil to good, is like the turning of a bell from one side to another, you cannot turn it but it will make a sound, and report its own motion. He that hath not a mouth open to report the glory of God's mercy to his soul, and to strengthen and edify his brethren, may justly question the truth of his own conversion. In Aaron's garments, (which were types of holiness,) there were golden bells and pomegranates; if we may make any allegorical application of it, this intimateth unto us, that as a holy life is fruitful and active in the duties of spiritual obedience, so it is loud and vocal in sounding forth the praises of God, and thereby endeavouring to edify the church. Gideon's lamps and pitchers were accompanied with trumpets; when God is pleased to put any light of grace into these earthen vessels of ours, we should have mouths full of thankfulness to return unto him the glory of his goodness.

And as that repentance is unsound which is not

accompanied with thankfulness, so that thankfulness is but empty and hypocritical, which doth not spring out of sound repentance. We use to say that the words of fools are born in their lips, but the words of wise men are drawn up out of an inward judgment. The calves of the lips are no better than the calves of the stall in God's account, if they have not a heart in them. Without this, the promise here made to God would be no other than that with which nurses deceive their little children, when they promise them a gay golden new nothing. Praise in the mouth without repentance in the heart, is like a sea-weed that grows without a root. Like the pouring of balm and spices upon a dead body, which can never thoroughly secure it from putrefaction. Like a perfume about one sick of the plague, whose sweet smell carries infection along with it. It is not the mentioning of mercies, but the improving of them unto piety, which expresseth our thankfulness unto God. God sets every blessing upon our score, and expects an answer and return suitable. He compares Chorazin and Bethsaida with Tyre and Sidon; and if their lives be as bad as these, their punishment shall be much heavier, because the mercies they enjoyed were much greater. The not using of mercies is the being unthankful for them. And it is a heavy account which men must give for abused mercies, Deut. xxxii. 6. Amos ii. 9—13. Luke iii. 7. Heb. vi. 7. Sins against mercy, and under mercy, are the first ripe fruit; when the sun shines hottest, the fruits ripen fastest, Amos viii. 1, 2. Jer. i. 11, 12. God doth not bear so long with the provocations of a church, as of those that are not a people; the sins of the Amorites were longer in ripening than the sins of Israel. When judgment is abroad, it will begin at the house of God.

2. We should be so much the more earnestly pressed unto this, by how much it is the greater evidence of our conversion unto God, and by how much more apt we are to call for mercies when we want them, than with the leper to return praises when we do enjoy them. Ten cried to be healed, but there was but one that returned glory to God. Vessels will sound when they are empty; fill them and they are presently dumb. When we want mercies, then with Pharaoh we cry out for pardon, for peace, for supplies, for deliverance; but when prayers are answered, and our turn served, how few remember the method which God prescribes, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me!" Psa. l. 15. yea how many like swine trample on the meat that feeds them, and tread under foot the mercies that preserve them! How many are so greedily intent upon the things they desire, that they cannot see nor value the things they enjoy! It is noted even of good king Hezekiah, that he did not render according to the benefits which he had received, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. Therefore we should be exhorted in our prayers for pardon and grace; to do as the church here doth, to promise the sacrifices of thankfulness and obedience; not as a price to purchase mercy, (for our good extends not unto God, Psa. xvi. 2.) but as a tie and obligation upon ourselves, to acknowledge and return the praise of mercy to him that gives it. And this the apostle exhorteth us unto, "that our requests should be made known unto God," not only with prayer and supplication, but with thanksgiving, Phil. iv. 6. 1 Thess. v. 17, 18. 1 Tim. ii. 1. which we find to have been his own practice, Eph. iii. 14, 20, 21. We should keep a catalogue of God's mercies to quicken us unto duty, as well as a catalogue of our

own sins to make us cry for mercy. And unto this duty of thanksgiving we may be excited :

By the consideration of God's greatness. "Great is the Lord, and therefore greatly to be praised," Psa. cxlv. 3. The praises of God should be according to his name, Psa. xlviii. 10. xcvi. 8. All things were made for no other end, but to return glory to him that made them. Because all things are of him, therefore all must be to him, Rom. xi. 36. and this the very figure of the world teacheth us ; for a circular line ends where it began, and returns back into its original point, by that means strengthening and preserving itself. For things are usually strongest when nearest their original, and the more remote from that, the weaker they grow. As a tree is strongest at the root, and a branch or bough next the trunk or stock, and the further out it goes from thence, the smaller and weaker it grows too ; and the further it is from the original of its being, the nearer it is unto not being : so all creatures are hereby taught, both for preservation of that being they have, and for supply of what perfections they want, and in both for the setting forth of the greatness of their Maker, (out of whose infinite Being all finite beings are sustained and perfected,) to run back unto God for whose sake they are and have been created. Rivers come from the sea, and therefore run back into the sea again. The trees receive sap from the earth, and within a while pay it back in those leaves that fall down to the earth again. Now as God hath made all creatures thus to show forth the glory of his greatness, so he will have them do it by these principles, and in that manner of working which he hath planted in them. Inanimate and mere natural creatures are bid to praise the Lord, Psa. cxlviii. 8, 9. but this they do

blind and ignorantly, like the arrow which flies toward the mark, but understandeth not its own motion, being directed thither by an understanding without and above itself. And thus when every thing by the natural weight and inclination of its own form moveth to the place where it may be preserved, or draweth to it those further degrees of perfection whereby it may be improved, and have more of being communicated to it, it may truly be said to praise the Lord, in that it obeyeth the law which he planted in it, and it is by his wise providence carried back towards him, to derive its conservation and perfection from the same fountain from whence its being did proceed. But now reasonable creatures being by God enriched with internal knowledge, and that knowledge in his church exceedingly raised by his manifestation of himself as their uttermost blessedness in the word unto them; he therefore requires that we should work actively, and with intention of the end for which he made us, guiding all our aims and inclinations towards his glory by that internal knowledge of his excellency which he hath planted in us, and revealed to us. And indeed all other creatures are in this sense said to glorify God, because the infinite power, wisdom, goodness and perfection of God which are in their beings and workings so notably relucant,* do become the object of reasonable creatures, to contemplate upon, and by that means draw forth admiration and adoration of him.

By the consideration of God's goodness. He deserves it at our hands. He gives more to us than we are able to render unto him. The sun shines on the moon with his own glorious light, the moon returns but a faint and spotted light upon the world. We

* Shining, splendid.

can return nothing unto God, but that which is his own, 1 Chron. xxix. 16. and it goes not with that purity from us as it came unto us. We cannot send forth a thought round about us, but it will return with a report of mercy, and that mercy calls for a return of praise. But above all, the goodness of God mentioned in the text, "taking away iniquity, and receiving graciously," this calls for the calves of the lips to be offered, as in the new moons, with trumpets and solemnity, Num. x. 10. The beams of the sun the more directly they fall on the body of the moon, do fill it with the more abundant light: so the more copious and notable God's mercies are unto us, the more enlarged should our praises be unto him. Therefore true penitents that have more tasted of mercy, are more obliged unto thanksgiving, Psal. cxlvii. 20. "Excellent speech is not comely in the mouth of fools," Prov. xvii. 7. But "praise is comely for the upright," Psal. xxxiii. 1. For as God is most dishonoured by the sins of holy men when they are committed against light, and break forth into scandal, as a spot in silk is a greater blemish than in sackcloth, 2 Sam. xii. 14. so is he most honoured by the confession and praises of holy men, because they know more of his glory and goodness than others, and can report greater things of him. Wicked men speak of God by hearsay and by notion only, but holy men by intimate experience: as the queen of Sheba knew more of Solomon's wisdom from his mouth than from his fame. He that sees but the outward court and buildings of a palace can say it is a glorious place; but he that, like the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, in Hezekiah's time, shall be admitted to see the house of precious things, and all the treasures of the palace, can speak much more honourably of it. Every one.

might see and admire the stones of the temple without, who was not admitted to view the gold and curious workmanship within. The more intimate communion a man hath with God as a Redeemer, the more glorious and abundant praises can he render unto him. Besides, praise is the language of heaven ; the whole happiness of the saints there is to enjoy God, and their whole business is to praise him. And they who are to live in another country will be more solicitous to learn the language, and fore-acquaint themselves with the manners and usages of that country, than they who have no hopes nor assurance of coming thither. As they who have hope to be like Christ in glory will purify themselves, that they may in the mean time be like him in grace, 1 John iii. 2, 3. so they that have hope to praise him for ever in heaven, will study the song of Moses and of the Lamb before they come thither. And indeed none can praise God but they that can abase and deny themselves ; wicked men in all duties serve and seek themselves. But the very formality of praise is to seek God, and to make him the end of our so doing. The apostle exhorts us "to offer ourselves a living sacrifice," Rom. xii. 1. that is to say, to separate ourselves for God and for his uses. The sacrifice we know was God's ; for his sake it was burnt, and broken, and destroyed. We must by such sacrifices, deny ourselves, be lost to ourselves, not serve, nor seek, nor aim at ourselves ; but resolve to esteem nothing dear in comparison of God's honour, and to be willing any way, whether by life or by death, that he may be magnified in us, Acts xxi. 13. Phil. i. 20. Love of communion in natural creatures is stronger than self-love ; stones will move upward, fire downward, to preserve the universe from a vacuity, and to keep the system of nature together. How

much more is, and ought the love of God himself in the new creature to be stronger, than self-love whereby it seeks and serves itself ! And without this, all other services are but Ananias's lie, lies to the Holy Ghost, keeping to ourselves what we would seem to bestow upon him. Lifting up the eyes, beating the breast, spreading the hands, bending the knee, hanging down the head, levelling the countenance, sighing, sobbing, fasting, howling, all nothing else but mocking of God. And we may say of such men, they deceive God and fail in his precepts, and they shall be themselves deceived, and fail in their own expectation. For "the hope of the wicked shall perish."

By a double consideration of ourselves.

(1.) Of our natural torpor and sluggishness unto this duty. As the Dead Sea drinks in the river Jordan and is never the sweeter, and the ocean all other rivers and is never the fresher ; so we are apt to receive daily mercies from God, and still remain insensible of them, unthankful for them. God's mercies to us are like the dew on the ground, our thanks to him like the dew on the fleece. We are like fishermen's weels, wide at that end which lets in the fish, but narrow at the other end, so that they cannot get out again. Greedy to get mercy, tenacious to hold it, but unthankful in acknowledging or right using of it. The rain comes down from heaven in showers, it goes up but in mists. We sow in our land one measure, and receive ten, yea Isaac received a hundred-fold, Gen. xxvi. 12. but God sows ten, it may be a hundred mercies amongst us, when we scarce return the praise and the fruit of one. Our hearts in this case are like the windows of the temple, 1 Kings vi. 4. wide inward to let in mercies, but narrow outward to let forth praises. Now, as Solomon says, "If the iron

be blunt, we must put to the more strength ;” and as husbandmen use where the nature of land is more defective, to supply it with the more importunate labour ; so having hearts so earthly for the performance of so heavenly a duty, we should use the more holy violence upon them ; and, as the widow did, extort justice from an unjust judge by her continual coming, Luke xviii. 5. we should press and urge, and with ingeminated* importunity charge this duty upon ourselves, as the psalmist doth, “ O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men,” Psa. cvii. 8. 15. 21. 31.

(2.) Of our own benefit. For indeed all the benefit which ariseth out of this duty redounds to us, and none to God. His glory is infinite and eternally the same, there is and can be no accession unto that by all our praises. When a glass reflecteth the brightness of the sun, there is but an acknowledgment of what is, not any addition of what is not. When an excellent orator makes a panegyric oration in praise of some honourable person, he doth not infuse any drachm of worth into the person, but only setteth forth and declareth that which is unto others. A curious picture praiseth a beautiful face, not by adding beauty to it, but by representing that which was in it before. The window which lets in light into a house doth not benefit the light, but the house into which the light shineth. So our praising God doth serve to quicken, comfort, and refresh ourselves, who have interest in so good a God : or to edify and encourage our brethren, that they may be ambitious to serve so honourable a Master ; but they add no lustre or glory to God at all.

Now, lastly, for the right performance of this duty.

* Redoubled.

It is founded on the due apprehensions of "God's being good, and of his doing good," *Psa. cxix. 68.* or on his excellency in himself, and his goodness unto us. In the former respect it standeth in adoring and extolling the great name of God, ascribing in our hearts and mouths blessedness unto him, acknowledging his infinite majesty in himself, and his sovereignty over us his poor creatures, *Exod. xv. 11. Mic. vii. 18.* and so covering our faces, and abhorring ourselves in his sight, *Isa. vi. 5. Job. xlii. 5, 6.* not daring to question any of his deep, absolute, and most unsearchable counsels; but because all things are of him, to acknowledge that all things ought to be for and to him, and are to be reduced to the ends of his glory by the counsel of his own will, *Rom. ix. 20, 21. xi. 33. 36. Matt. xi. 25, 26. Psa. cxxxv. 5, 6. Job ix. 12. Eph. i. 11.* In the latter respect, as he is the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and hope for our blessedness; so it importeth, First, A glorying and rejoicing in him as our alone felicity, *Psa. xxxiii. 1. Hab. iii. 18. Phil. iv. 4.* Second, A choosing and preferring him above all other good things, making him our end and aim, in life, in death, in doing, in suffering, *Rom. iv. 7, 8.* Third, A thankful acknowledgment of all his mercies, as most beneficial unto us, and most gratuitous and free in regard of him, *2 Sam. vii. 18. Lam. iii. 22, 23.* Last, A constant endeavour of a holy life, so to bring forth fruit to do the will of God, and to finish his work which he hath set us, so to order our conversation aright before him, as that he may have ascribed unto him the glory of his authority over the consciences of men, and of the power of his love shed abroad in their hearts, and that all who see our conversation may say, Doubtless the God whom these men serve

after so holy a manner, for whom they despise all outward and sinful pleasures, is a holy and blessed God, infinitely able to comfort, satisfy, and reward all those that so conscionably and constantly give themselves up unto him, Psa. l. 23. Deut. iv. 6, 7. Matt. xxii. 16. 2 Cor. ix. 13. 1 Pet. xii.

Second. The other particular in their covenant is, amendment of life, and a more special care against those sins of carnal confidence, and spiritual adultery, whereby they have formerly dishonoured and provoked God. From whence there are two observations which offer themselves.

I. That true repentance and sound conversion, as it makes a man thankful for the pardon of sin past, so it makes him careful against the practice of sin for the time to come, especially those particular sins, whereby he had formerly most dishonoured God, and defiled his own conscience. This doctrine consisteth of two parts which we will consider asunder.

And first, of this care and purpose of amendment in *general*. When the poor converts who had been guilty of the most precious and innocent blood that ever was shed, began to be convinced of that horrible sin, and found those nails wherewith they had fastened the Lord of glory to a cross, pricking and piercing of their own hearts, with what bleeding and relenting affections did they mourn over him! with what earnest importunities did they inquire after the way of salvation, wherein they might serve and enjoy him! Never were their hands more cruel in shedding that blood, than their hearts were now solicitous to be bathed in it, to be cleansed by it, Acts ii. 37. The poor prodigal, who is the emblem of a penitent sinner, when he came to himself again, or bethought himself,

as the phrase is, 1 Kings viii. 47. (for we do never depart from God, but we do withal forsake and lose ourselves, and are transported with a spiritual madness from our right minds,) immediately grew to a resolution of arising out of that base and brutish condition, and of going home to his father, and by that means to his senses again. So when by John's preaching of repentance, men were turned to the wisdom of the just, (for all unrighteousness is folly and madness,) and were prepared for the Lord, we immediately find what a special care they had to be informed in the ways of duty, earnestly inquiring after that new course of obedience which they were now to walk in, Luke iii. 10. 12. All true penitents are of the mind of these in the text, "We will not say any more,"—and "What have I to do any more with idols?" ver. 8. as Ezra in his penitent prayer, "Should we now again break thy commandments," ch. ix. 14. When Christ rose from the dead, he died no more: and when we repent of sin, it must be with a repentance that must never any more be repented of, Rom. vi. 9. 12. 2 Cor. vii. 10. The time past of our life must suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, 1 Pet. iv. 3.

This care ariseth from the nature of true repentance, which has two names usually given it; 1. A change of the mind; the heart is framed to have other and truer notions of sin, of grace, of heaven, of hell, of conscience, of salvation than it had before; for the mind of wicked men being defiled, they can frame to themselves none but impure apprehensions of spiritual things, as a yellow eye sees every thing yellow, and a bitter palate tastes every thing bitter. 2. A change of the cares and endeavours of life. That whereas before a man made provision for the flesh, and his study and care was how to satisfy the lusts of his own heart.

Rom. xiii. 14. what he should eat, what he should drink, wherewith he should be clothed. Now his care is how he may be saved, how he may honour and enjoy God, Acts ii. 37. xvi. 30. The first question in repentance is, "What have I done?" Jer. viii. 6. and the next question is, "What shall I do?" Acts ix. 6. And this care repentance worketh,

1. By a godly sorrow for sin past. It brings into a man's remembrance the history of his former life, makes him with heaviness of spirit recount the guilt of the innumerable sins wherewith he hath bound himself as with chains of darkness: the loss of so much precious time mispent in the service of such a master as had no other wages to give but shame and death. The horrible indignities thereby offered to the majesty and justice of God, the odious contempt of his holy will and sovereign authority; the daring neglect of his threatenings, and undervaluing of his rewards; the high provocation of his jealousy and displeasure; the base rivalry and contesting of filthy lusts with the grace of the gospel, and the precious blood of the Son of God; the gainsaying, and wrestling, and stubborn antipathy of a carnal heart to the pure motions of the Spirit and word of Christ; the presumptuous repulses of him that standeth at the door and knocks, waiting that he may be gracious; the long turning of his back, and thrusting away from him the word of reconciliation, wherein Christ by his ambassadors had so often besought him to be reconciled unto God. The remembrance of these things makes a man look with self-aborrancy upon himself, and full detestation upon his former courses. And he now no longer considers the silver or the gold, the profit or the pleasure of his wonted lusts, though they be ever so delectable or desirable in the eye of flesh,

he looks upon them as accursed things to be thrown away, as the converts did upon their costly and curious books, Acts xix. 19. Isa. xxx. 22. xxxi. 7. Sin is like a plaited picture: on the one side of it to the impenitent appeareth nothing but the beauty of pleasure, whereby it bewitcheth and allureth them; on the other side, to the penitent appeareth nothing but the horrid and ugly face of guilt and shame, whereby it amazeth and confoundeth them. Thus the remembrance of sin past, (which they are very careful to keep always in their sight, Psal. li. 3.) doth by godly sorrow work especial care of amendment of life for the time to come, 2 Chron. vi. 37, 38. Psal. cxix. 59. Ezek. xvi. 61. 63. xx. 43.

2. By a present sense of the weight and burden of remaining corruptions, which work, and move, and put forth what strength they can to resist the grace of God in us. As the time past wherein sin reigned, so the present burden of sin besetting us, is esteemed sufficient, and makes a man careful not to load himself wilfully with more, being ready to sink, and forced to cry out under the pain of those which he unwillingly lieth under already. A very glutton when he is in a fit of the gout or stone, will forbear those meats which feed so painful diseases. A penitent sinner is continually in pain under the body of sin, and therefore dares not feed so dangerous and tormenting a disease. The more spiritual any man is, the more painful and burdensome is corruption to him, Rom. vii. 22. For sin to the new man is as sickness to the natural man. The more exquisite and delicate the natural senses are, the more are they sensible and affected with that which offends nature. Contraries cannot be together without combat. The spirit will lust against the flesh, and not suffer a man

to fulfil the lusts of it, Gal. v. 16, 17. the seed of God will keep down the strength of sin, 1 John iii. 9.

3. By a holy jealousy, and godly fear of the falseness and backsliding of our corrupt heart, lest, like Lot's wife, it should look back towards Sodom, and like Israel have a mind hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt, the wonted profits and pleasures of forsaken lusts. A godly heart prizeth the love of God, and the feelings of spiritual comfort from thence arising above all other things, and is afraid to lose them. It hath felt the burnings of sin, the stinging of these fiery serpents, and hath often been forced to befool itself, and to beshrew its own ignorance, and with Ephraim to emite upon the thigh. And the burnt child dreads the fire, and dares not meddle any more with it; considers the heaviness of God's frown, the rigour of his law, the weakness and fickleness of the heart of man, the difficulty of finding Christ out when he hath withdrawn himself, and of recovering light and peace again when the soul hath wilfully brought itself under a cloud; and therefore will not venture to harden itself against God. Thus godly fear keeps men from sin, Job xxxi. 23. Psal. cxix. 120. Prov. xxviii. 14. Ecc. ix. 2. Jer. xxxii. 40. Phil. ii. 12. Psal. iv. 4

4. By a love to Christ, and a sweet recounting of the mercies of God in him. The less a man loves sin, the more he shall love Christ. Now repentance works a hatred of sin, and thereupon a love of Christ, which love is ever operative, and putting forth itself towards holiness of life. As the love of God in Christ towards us worketh forgiveness of sin: so our reciprocal love, wrought by the feeling and comfort of that forgiveness, worketh in us a hatred of sin. A direct love begets a reflect love, as the heat wrought

in the earth strikes back a heat into the air again. The woman in the gospel, having much forgiven her, loved much, Luke vii. 47. "We love him because he loved us first;" and love will not suffer a man to wrong the things which he loves. What man ever threw away jewels or money when he might have kept them? except when the predominant love of something better made these things comparatively hateful, Luke xiv. 26. What woman could be persuaded to throw away her sucking child from her breast unto wild beasts to devour it? Our love to Christ and his law will not suffer us to cast him off, or to throw his law behind our backs. New obedience is ever joined unto pardon of sin and repentance for it, by the method of God's decrees, by the order and chain of salvation, and ariseth out of the internal character and disposition of a child of God. We are not sons only by adoption, appointed to a new inheritance; but we are sons by regeneration also, partakers of a new nature, designed unto a new life, joined unto a new head, descended from a new Adam, unto whom therefore we are in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his sufferings to be made conformable, Phil. iii. 10. And the apostle hath many excellent and weighty arguments to enforce this upon us: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 1—4. 1. Our fellowship with Christ; "we are risen with him:" what he did corporally for us, he doth the same spiritually in us. As a Saviour and Mediator, he died and rose alone; but

as a head and second Adam, he never did any thing, but his mystical body and seed were so taken into the fellowship of it, as to be made conformable unto it. Therefore, if he rose as a Saviour to justify us, we must as members be therein fashioned unto him, and rise spiritually by heavenly-mindedness, and a new life to glorify him. 2. We must have our affections in heaven, because Christ is there. The heart ever turns towards its treasure ; where the body is, thither will the eagles resort. 3. He is there in glory at God's right hand, and grace shall move to glory as a piece of earth to the whole. And he is there on our business, making intercession in our behalf, providing a place for us, sending down gifts unto us. And the client cannot but have his heart on his business, when the advocate is actually stirring about it. 4. We are dead with Christ, as to the life of sin. And a dead man takes no thought nor care for the things of that life from whence he is departed. A man naturally dead looks not after food, or raiment, or land, or money, or labour, &c. And a man dead to sin, takes no more care how to provide for it. 5. In Christ we have a new life, therefore we should have new inclinations suitable unto it, and new provisions laid in for it. A natural man feeds on worldly things by sense, a spiritual man feeds on heavenly things by faith and conscience. We can have nothing from the first Adam which is not mortal and mortiferous.* Nothing from the second which is not vital and eternal. Whatever the one gives us shrinks and withers unto death ; whatever the other, springs and proceeds unto immortal life. Our life therefore being new, the affections that serve it, and wait upon it, must be new likewise. 6. This life is our own,

* Tending to death.

not so any thing in the world besides. I can purchase in the world only to me and mine heirs for ever. But spiritual purchases are to myself for ever. And every man's affections are naturally most fixed upon that which is most his own. 7. It is a hidden life, the best of it is yet unseen, 1 John iii. 2. and though the cabinet which is seen be rich, yet the jewel which is hidden in it is much richer. As there is a sinful curiosity in lust, to look after the hidden things of iniquity, and to hanker after forbidden pleasures ; so there is a spiritual curiosity or ambition in grace, to aspire towards hidden treasures, to press forward towards things that are before us, to be clothed upon with our house that is from heaven. As Absalom, being brought from banishment, longed to see the face of his father ; so the soul, being delivered out of darkness, never thinks it sees enough of light. When God did most intimately reveal himself unto Moses, Moses did most earnestly beseech him to show him his glory, Exod. xxxiii. 11. 18. The more sweetness we find in the first fruits, in so much of Christ as is revealed to us, the more strong are our affections to the whole harvest, to that abundance of him which is hidden from us. A few clusters of grapes and bunches of figs will inflame the desire of enjoying that Canaan which abounds with them. 8. It is hidden with Christ, so hidden as that we know where it is. Hidden so that the enemy cannot reach it, but not hidden from the faith of the child. 9. It is hidden in God. It is life in the fountain, Psa. xxxvi. 9. and every thing is most perfect in its original and fountain. And this is such a fountain of life as hath in it fulness without satiety, and purity without defilement, and perpetuity without decay, and all-sufficiency without defect. Lastly, it is but hidden, it is not lost,

hidden like seed in the ground ; when Christ the Sun of righteousness shall appear, this life of ours in him will spring up, and appear glorious.

Now next let us consider this care of repentance against a man's own more *particular* and *special* sins. "Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses," &c. Israel had been guilty of very many provocations, but when they come to covenant with God, and to renew their repentance, their thoughts and cares are most set against their carnal confidence and spiritual adultery. Their most unfeigned detestations, their most serious resolutions were against these their most easily besetting sins. True repentance worketh indeed a general hatred of every false way, Psa. cxix. 128. and suffereth not a man to allow himself in the smallest sin. Yet as the dog in hunting the deer, though he drive the whole herd before him yet fixeth his eye and scent upon some one in particular, which is singled out by the dart of the huntsman ; so, though sound conversion works a universal hatred of all sin, because it is sin, (for hatred is ever against the whole kind of a thing,) though every member of the old man be mortified, and every grace of the new man shaped and fashioned in us : yet the severest exercise of that hatred is against the sins whereunto the conscience hath been more enslaved, and by which the name of God hath been most dishonoured. A man that hath many wounds, if there be any of them more deep, dangerous, or nearer any vital part than the other, though he will endeavour to cure them all, yet his chief care will be towards that. As the king of Syria gave command to his army to single out the king of Israel in the battle, 1 Kings xxii. 31. so doth repentance lay its batteries most against the highest, and strongest, and most reigning sin of the

heart ; and by how much the more a man prized it before, by so much the more doth he detest it now. They counted no silver nor gold too good to frame their idols of before ; their ear-rings shall go to make them a calf, *Exod. xxxii. 3.* but when they repent, nothing can be too base to compare them or to cast them unto, *Isa. ii. 20. xxx. 22.*

The human nature is the same in all men, yet some faculties are more vigorous in some, and other in others ; some witty, others strong ; some beautiful, others proper ; some a quick eye, others a ready tongue ; some for learned, others for mechanical professions : as some grounds take better to some kind of grain than to others ; so in the new man, though all the graces of Christ are in some degree and proportion shaped in every regenerate person, yet one excels in one grace, another in another. Abraham in faith, Job in patience, Moses in meekness, David in meditation, Solomon in wisdom, Phinehas in zeal, Mary Magdalen in love, Paul in labour, &c. And so it is in the old man too. Though by nature we have all the members of original corruption, yet these put themselves forth in actual vigour differently. One man is more possessed by a proud devil, another by an unclean one ; Ahaz superstitious, Balaam ambitious, Cain envious, Korah stubborn, Esau profane, Ishmael a mocker, the young man a worldling. According to different complexions and tempers of body, (by which habitual lust is excited and called forth into action,) or according to the differences of education, countries, callings, converse, and interests in the world, so men are differently assaulted with distinct kinds of sin, and most men have their beloved lusts, which they may more properly call their own, *Psa. xviii. 23.* And as this sin is usually the special bar

and obstacle that keeps men from Christ, as we see in the example of the young man, Mark x. 22. and of the Jews, John v. 44. xii. 42, 43. so when Christ hath broken this obstacle, and obtained the throne in a man's heart, then the chief work of repentance is to keep this sin from gathering strength again; for as they say of some kind of serpents, that being cut in pieces the parts will wriggle towards one another, and close and get life again, so of all sins a man is in most danger of the reviving of his own proper corruption; as being like the nettle, whose roots are so crooked, so catching to the ground, that it is a work of much care to keep the ground clean of them after they are weeded out.

And therefore repentance sets itself particularly against that sin, as a special argument of sincerity. "I was upright," saith David, "before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity," Psa. xviii. 23. And, "He that is begotten of God," saith the apostle, "keepeth himself," 1 John v. 18. which he doth certainly with most vigilance there where he is most in danger of being assaulted. See in David; he had in that great and scandalous fall of his stained his conscience with impure lust, with the guilt of blood and that not out of ignorance or common infirmity, or sudden passion and surprisal of some hasty temptation, (which might happily have consisted with uprightness,) but seriously and deliberately, using many cunning arts, and carnal shifts of sinful wisdom to colour and daub it over: and, lastly, by this means had given a great blow to the holy name of God, and caused his enemies to blaspheme, as Nathan tells him, 2 Sam. xii. 14. Therefore in his penitential psalm these four things he principally insists upon; a clean heart, pardon of blood-guiltiness, truth in the

inward parts, and occasion to teach transgressors the way of God, that they may be converted, Psa. li. 6, 7. 10. 13, 14. See it in Zaccheus ; worldliness and defrauding had been his sin, restitution and liberality are the evidences of his repentance especially for that sin, Luke xix. 8. So Mary Magdalen ;* her sin had been uncleanness, her eyes vessels and factors for adultery, her hair a net plaited and spread to catch sinners. She remembered her wanton kisses, her provoking perfumes ; and now in her conversion where her sin had been most prevalent, there her sorrow was most penitent, and her repentance most vigilant ; her eyes vessels of tears, her kisses humbled, or rather advanced unto the feet of Christ ; her hair a towel to wipe off those tears which she judged too unclean for so holy feet to be washed withal ; her ointment poured out upon a new lover who had anointed her with his grace, Luke vii. 37, 38. The sin of the jailer against Paul and Silas was cruelty, Acts xvi. 24. and the first fruit of his repentance was courtesy to them ; he brought them out of a dungeon into his own house ; from the stocks to his table ; became a host instead of a jailer, a surgeon instead of a tormentor, and washed their stripes, ver. 30. 33, 34. This was Daniel's method of working repentance in Nebuchadnezzar, persuading a proud, oppressing tyrant unto justice and mercy, Dan. iv. 27. and Paul unto Felix, preaching before a corrupt and lascivious judge of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Acts xxiv. 25. and to the learned and superstitious philosophers, in a learned discovery, and making known unto them their unknown God, Acts xvii. 23. So John, the preacher of repentance,

* Many modern commentators think that there is no ground to suppose that Mary Magdalen was an immoral character.

laid his axe to the root of every tree, to the radical and prevailing lust in every order of men ; to extortion in the publican, and to covetousness in the people, to violence in the soldiers, to carnal confidence in the pharisees, Matt. iii. 7. Luke iii. 9—14. and so Christ to the young man, " One thing thou wantest," Mark x. 21. and to the woman of Samaria, " Go call thy husband," John iv. 16. when indeed he was an adulterer and not a husband.

The reason of this care of repentance is :

(1.) Because in godly sorrow the sin hath lain most heavy upon the conscience. Hereby God hath been most of all despised and dishonoured ; our consciences most wasted and defiled ; our hearts most hardened ; our affections most bewitched and entangled. It hath been a master sin, that hath been able to command and to draw in many other servile lusts to wait upon it. Many wounds, even after they have been healed, will against change of weather affect the part wherein they were with pain and aching ; and therefore men usually are more tender of that part, keep it warmer, fence it with furs and clothes ; as the apostle saith, that on our dishonourable parts we bestow the more abundant honour, so on such an infirm and tender part we bestow the more abundant care ; and the like do we in those wounds of the soul which are most apt to bleed afresh.

(2.) Hereby, as we said before, we testify our uprightness. When we will not spare our beloved sin, nor roll it under our tongue, nor hide it in our tent, when we will not muffle nor disguise ourselves like Tamar, nor hide amongst the bushes and trees like Adam, or in the sides of the ship with Jonah ; nor spare any wedge of gold with Achan, or any delicate Agag, any fatling sins with Saul ; but with David will

show that we hate every false way, by throwing the first stone at our first sin, that which lay nearest and closest in our bosoms, which the scripture calls cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye. As Cranmer put that hand first into the fire which had before subscribed to save his life. The story of the Turkish emperor is commonly known, who being reported so to dote on one of his concubines, as for love of her to neglect the affairs of his kingdom, caused her to be brought forth in great pomp, and cut off her head before his bashaws, to assure them that nothing was so dear unto him but that he could willingly part from it to attend the public welfare. This was an act of cruelty in him ; but the like is an act of penitency in us when we can sacrifice the dearest affections wherewith we served sin. Let Christ kill our Agag, though delicately apparelled, and divide the richest of all our spoils. If we be learned, we shall direct all our studies unto the fear of God, Ecc. xii. 12, 13. if rich, we shall lay up a foundation of good works against the time to come, and consecrate our merchandise as holy to the Lord, 1 Tim. vi. 18. Isa. xxiii. 18. If wise, if honourable, if powerful, if adorned with any endowment, our business will be with Bezaleel and Aholiab, to adorn the gospel with them all, from our gold to our goat's hair, to lay out all upon the sanctuary ; to make those members and abilities which had been Satan's armour and weapons of unholiness to be now weapons of holiness, and dedicated unto Christ, Rom. vi. 19. This is the holy revenge which godly sorrow taketh upon sin, 2 Cor. vii. 11.

If any men who profess repentance, and think they are already long ago converted unto God, would examine the truth of their conversion by this touchstone,

it would minister matter of much humiliation and fear unto them, when their own heart would reply against them as Samuel against Saul. Hast thou indeed, as thou professest, done the work of the Lord in destroying Amalek ; “ What then meaneth the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen in mine ears ? ” What mean these worldly and covetous practices ? these lascivious or revengeful speeches ? these earthly, sensual, or ambitious lusts ? are these Agags spared and kept delicately ? and canst thou please thyself in the thoughts of a sound repentance ? Did Paul fear that God would humble him for those who had not repented amongst the Corinthians by this argument, because he should find envyings, strifes, and debates amongst them ? 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21. And wilt thou presume on thy repentance, and not be humbled, when thou findest the same things in thyself ? Hast thou never yet proclaimed defiance to thy beloved sin, made it the mark of thy greatest sorrows, of thy strongest prayers and complaints unto God ? Hast thou never stirred up a holy indignation and revenge against it, and above all things taken off thy thoughts from the meditation and love of it, and found pleasure in the holy severity of God’s book and the ministry thereof against it ? made no covenant with thine eye, put no knife to thy throat, set no door before thy lips, made no friends of unrighteous mammon ? Dost thou still retain hankering affections after thy wonted delights, as Lot’s wife after Sodom ? and are the flesh-pots of Egypt desirable in thy thoughts still ? “ Be not high-minded, but fear.” There is no greater argument of an unsound repentance than indulgent thoughts, and reserved delight and complacency in a master sin. The devil will diligently observe and hastily catch one kind glance

of this nature, (as Benhadad's servants did, 1 Kings xx. 33.) and make use of it to do us mischief. David had been free from some of his greatest troubles if he had not relented towards Absalom, and called him home from banishment. He no sooner kissed Absalom, but Absalom courted and kissed the people to steal their hearts away from him. As there are in points of faith fundamental articles, so there are in points of practice fundamental duties. And amongst them none more primary and essential unto true christians than self-denial, Matt. xvi. 24. and this is one special part and branch of self-denial, to keep ourselves from our own iniquity; and to say to our most costly and darling lusts, get ye hence; Asshur away, idols away; I will rather be fatherless than rely upon such helpers.

SERMON IV.

ASSHUR SHALL NOT SAVE US ; WE WILL NOT RIDE UPON HORSES :
NEITHER WILL WE SAY ANY MORE TO THE WORK OF OUR
HANDS, YE ARE OUR GODS ; FOR IN THEE THE FATHERLESS
FINDETH MERCY. I WILL HEAL THEIR BACKSLIDINGS, I WILL
LOVE THEM FREELY : FOR MINE ANGER IS TURNED AWAY
FROM HIM.—JOSEA XIV. 3, 4.

THERE remaineth the second point formerly mentioned, from the promise or covenant, which Israel here makes, which I will briefly touch, and so proceed unto the fourth verse ; and that is this :

II. That true repentance and conversion taketh off the heart from all carnal confidence, either in preparations of our own ; “ We will not ride upon horses : ” or in foreign aid from any confederates, especially enemies of God and his church, though otherwise ever so potent ; “ Asshur shall not save us : ” or, lastly, in any superstitious and corrupt worship, which sends us to God the wrong way ; “ We will not say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods : ” and causeth the soul in all conditions, be they ever so desperate, so desolate, so incurable, to rely only upon God. It is very much in the nature of fallen man to affect an absoluteness, and a self-sufficiency, to seek the good that he desireth within himself, and to derive from himself the strength whereby he would repel any evil which he feareth. This staying within itself, reflecting upon its own power and wisdom, and by consequence affecting an independency upon any superior virtue in being and working,

making itself the first cause and the last end of its own motions ; is by divines conceived to have been the first sin by which the creature fell from God ; and it was the first temptation by which Satan prevailed to draw man from God too. For since, next unto God, every reasonable created being is nearest unto itself, we cannot conceive how it should turn from God, and not in the next step turn unto itself, and by consequence, whatsoever it was in a regular dependence to have derived from God, being fallen from him, it doth by an irregular dependence seek for from itself. Hence it is that men of power are apt to deify their own strength, and to frame opinions of absoluteness to themselves, and to deride the thoughts of any power above them ; as Pharaoh, *Exod. v. 2.* and Goliath, *1 Sam. xvii. 8. 10. 44.* and Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan. iii. 15.* and Sennacherib, *2 Kings xviii. 33—35.* *Isa. x. 8—11. 13, 14.* And men of wisdom to defy their own reason, and to deride anything that is above or against their own conceptions ; as Tyros, *Ezek. xxviii. 2. 6.* and the pharisees, *Luke xvi. 14.* *John vii. 48, 49. 52.* *Acts iv. 11.* *Isa. xlix. 7. liii. 3.* and the philosophers, *Acts xvii. 18. 32.* *1 Cor. i. 22, 23.* And men of morality and virtue to deify their own righteousness, to rely on their own merits and performances, and to deride righteousness imputed and precarious ; * as the Jews, *Rom. x. 5.* and Paul before his conversion, *Rom. vii. 9.* *Phil. iii. 6. 9.* so natural is it for a sinful creature, who seeketh only himself, and maketh himself the last end, to seek only unto himself, and to make himself the first cause and mover towards that end.

But because God will not give his glory to another, nor suffer any creature to encroach upon his prerogative,

* Dependent.

or to sit down in this throne, he hath therefore always blasted the policies and attempts of such as aspired unto such an absoluteness and independency, making them know in the end that they are but men, Psa. ix. 19, 20. and that the Most High ruleth over all : and that it is an enterprise more full of folly than it is of pride for any creature to work its own safety and felicity out of itself. And as men usually are most vigilant upon their immediate interests, and most jealous and active against all encroachments thereupon ; so we shall ever find that God doth single out no men to be such notable monuments of his justice and their own ruin and folly, as those who have vied with him in the points of power, wisdom, and other divine prerogatives, aspiring unto that absoluteness, self-sufficiency, self-interest, and independency which belongeth only unto him. And as he hath by the destruction of Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Herod, and divers others, taught us the madness of this ambition ; so doth he by our own daily preservation teach us the same. For if God have appointed that we should go out of ourselves unto a thing below for a vital subsistence, to bread for food, to house for harbour, to clothes for warmth, &c. much more hath he appointed that we should go out of ourselves for a blessed and happy subsistence, by how much the more is required unto blessedness than unto life, and by how much the greater is our impotency unto the greatest and highest end.

Yet so desperate is the aversion of sinful man from God, that when he is convinced of his impotency, and driven off from self-dependence, and reduced unto such extremities as should in reason lead him back unto God, yet when he hath no horses of his own to ride upon, no means of his own to escape evil, yet still

he will betake himself unto creatures like himself, though they be enemies unto God, and enemies unto him too for God's sake, (for so was the Assyrian unto Israel,) yet, "If Ephraim see his sickness, and Judah his wound, Ephraim will go to the Assyrian and king Jareb for help," Hos. v. 13. If he must beg, he would rather do it of an enemy than a God, yea, though he dissuade him from it and threaten him for it. Ahaz would not believe though a sign were offered him, nor be persuaded to trust in God to deliver him from Rezin and Pekah, though he promise him to do it; but under pretence of not tempting God in the use of means, will weary God with his provocation, and rob God to pay the Assyrian, "who was not a help, but a distress unto him," 2 Kings xvi. 5. 8. 17, 18. 2 Chron. xxviii. 20, 21. Isa. vii. 8. 13. xxx. 5.

Well, God is many times pleased to way-lay human counsels, even in this case too, and so to strip them not only of their own provisions, but of their foreign succours and supplies, as that they have no refuge left but unto him. Their horses fail them, their Assyrian fails them, Hos. vii. 11, 12. viii. 9, 10. Their hope hath nothing either really good to comfort them at home, or as matter of help and aid to support them from abroad. They are brought as Israel into a wilderness where they are constrained to go to God, because they have no second causes to help them. And yet even here wicked men will make a shift to keep off from God, when they have nothing in the world to turn unto. This is the formal and intimate malignity of sin to decline God, and to be impatient of him in his own way. If wicked men be necessitated to implore help from God, they will invent ways of their own to do it. If horses fail, and Asshur fail, and Israel must go to God whether he will or not, it shall not be to

the God that made him, but to a god of his own making; and when they have most need of their glory, they will "change it into that which cannot profit," Jer. ii. 11. So foolish was Jeroboam, as by two calves at Dan and Bethel to think his kingdom should be established, and by that means rooted out his own family, and at last ruined the kingdom, 1 Kings xii. 28, 29. xiv. 10. 15. 29. 2 Kings xvii. 21. 23. Hos. viii. 4, 5. x. 5. 8. 15. So foolish was Ahaz, as to seek help of those gods which were the ruin of him and all Israel, 2 Chron. xxviii. 23. Such a strong antipathy and averseness there is in the soul of natural men unto God, as that when they are in distress they go to him last of all; they never think of him so long as their own strength and their foreign confederacies hold out; and when at last they are driven to him, they know not how to hold communion with him in his own way, but frame carnal and superstitious ways of worship to themselves, and so in their very seeking unto him do provoke him to forsake them; and the very things whereon they lean go up into their hand to pierce it, Isa. xv. 2. xvi. 12. 1 Kings xviii. 26.

Now then the proper work of true repentance being to turn a man the right way unto God, it taketh a man off from all this carnal and superstitious confidence, and directeth the soul in the greatest difficulties to cast itself with comfort and confidence upon God alone. So it is prophesied of the remnant of God's people, that is, the penitent part of them, (for the remnant are those that came up "with weeping and supplication, seeking the Lord their God, and asking the way to Sion with their faces thitherward," Jer. xxxi. 7. 9. l. 4, 5.) that they should "no more again stay themselves upon him that smote them, but should

stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel in truth, and should return unto the mighty God," Isa. x. 20, 21. They resolve the Lord shall save them, and not the Assyrian. So say the godly in the psalmist, "A horse is a vain thing for safety, neither shall he deliver any by his great strength," &c. "Our soul waiteth for the Lord, he is our help and shield," Ps. xxxiii. 17, 20. They will not say any more, "We will fly upon horses, we will ride upon the swift," Isa. xxx. 16. Lastly, "At that day," saith the prophet, speaking of the penitent remnant and gleanings of Jacob, "shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel; and he shall not look to the altars the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, the groves or the images," Isa. xvii. 7, 8. And again, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains," that is, from the idols which they had set up and worshipped in high places, "Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel," Jer. iii. 23. They will not say any more to the work of their hands, "Ye are our gods."

So then, the plain duties of the text are these:

1. To trust in God who is all-sufficient to help, who is Jehovah, the fountain of being, and can give being to any promise, to any mercy which he intends for his people, cannot only work, but command; not only command, but create deliverance, and fetch it out of darkness and desolation. He hath everlasting strength; there is no time, no case, no condition, wherein his help is not at hand, whenever he shall command it, Isa. xxvi. 4.

2. We must not trust in any creature.

- (1.) Not in Asshur, in any confederacy or combination with God's enemies, be they otherwise ever so

potent. Jehoshaphat did so, and his ships were broken, 2 Chron. xx. 35. 37. Ahaz did so, and his people were distressed, 2 Chron. xxviii. 21. It is impossible for God's enemies to be cordial to God's people, so long as they continue cordial to their God. There is such an irreconcilable enmity between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, that it is incredible to suppose that the enemies of the church will do any thing which may in itself tend to the good of it, or that any end and design by them pursued can be severed from their own malignant interest. Let white be mingled with any colour which is not itself, and it loseth of its own beauty. It is not possible for God's people to join with any that are his enemies, and not lose of their own purity thereby. He must be as wise and as potent as God who can use the rage of God's enemies, and convert it when he hath done to the good of God's church, and the glory of God's name, and be able at pleasure to restrain and call it in again. We must ever take heed of this dangerous competition between our own interests and God's to be so tender and intent upon that, as to hazard and shake this. Jeroboam did so, but it was fatal to him and to all Israel. The end of Judah's combining with the Assyrian, was that they might rejoice against Rezin and Remaliah's son: but the consequence of it, which they never intended, was, that the Assyrian came over all the channels, and over all the banks, and overflowed, and went over, and reached to the very neck, and if it had not been Immanuel's land, would have endangered it to the drowning of it, Isa. viii. 6—8. If Israel for his own ends join with Asshur, it will hardly be possible for him in so doing, though against his own will, not to promote the ends of Asshur against God's church and against himself too. And yet the

prophet would not have in that case God's people to be dismayed, or to say, A confederacy, a confederacy, but to sanctify the Lord himself, and make him their fear and their dread, who will certainly be a sanctuary unto them, and will bind up his testimony, and seal the law amongst his disciples, when others shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. If we preserve Immanuel's right in us, and ours in him, all confederacies against us shall be broken, all counsels shall come to nought.

(2.) Not in horses, or in any other human preparations and provisions of our own. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we," saith David, "will remember the name of the Lord our God," *Psa.* xx. 7. That name can do more with a sling and a stone, than Goliath with all his armour, *1 Sam.* xvii. 45. it is a strong tower for protection and safety to all that fly unto it, *Prov.* xviii. 10. Whereas horses, though they be prepared against the day of battle, yet safety cometh only from the Lord, *Prov.* xxi. 31. "Horses are flesh and not spirit, and their riders are men and not God, and cursed are they that make flesh their arm, and depart from the Lord," *Isa.* xxxi. 1—3. *Jer.* xvii. 5. No, not in variety of means and ways of help, which seemeth to be intimated in the word riding, from one confederate unto another: if Asshur fail, I will post to Egypt; if one friend or counsel fail, I will make haste to another, a sin very frequently charged upon Israel, *Hos.* vii. 11. *Isa.* xx. 5. *lvii.* 10. *Jer.* ii. 36, 37. These are not to be trusted in. 1. Because of the intrinsical weakness and defect of ability in the creature to help; every man is a liar, either by imposture, and so in purpose, or by impotency, and so in the event, deceiving those who rely upon him, *Psa.* lxii. 9. 2. Because of ignorance and defect of

wisdom in us to apply that strength which is in the creature unto the best advantage. None but an artificer can turn and govern the natural efficacy of fire, wind, water, unto the works of art. The wisdom whereby we should direct created virtues unto human ends, is not in, or of ourselves, but it comes from God, James i. 5. Isa. xxviii. 26. 29. Exod. xxxvi. 1, 2. Ecc. vii. 24. ix. 1. 11.

(3.) Nor in idols, nor in corrupting the worship of God. Idols are lies, and teachers of lies, and promisers of lies to all that trust in them, Jer. x. 8. 14—16. Hab. ii. 18. Rev. xxii. 15. an idol is just nothing in the world, 1 Cor. viii. 4. and that which is nothing can do nothing for those who rely upon it. Whatever thing a man trusteth in, in time of trouble, must needs have these things in it to ground that confidence upon.

A knowledge of him and his wants ; therefore we are bid to trust in God's providence over us for all outward good things, because he knoweth that we have need of them, Matt. iv. 32.

A loving and merciful disposition to help him. A man may sometimes receive help from such as love him not, out of policy and in pursuance of other ends and intents ; but he cannot confidently rely upon any aid which is not first founded in love. I ever suspect and fear the gifts and succours which proceed from an enemy ; they will have their own ends only, even then when they seem to tender and serve me ; therefore David singeth out God's mercy as the object of his trust, Psa. lii. 8.

A manifestation of that love in some promise or other engaging unto assistance. For how can I with assurance and without hesitancy expect help there, where I never received any promise of it ? here was

the ground of David's, Jehoshaphat's, Daniel's trust in God, the word and promise which he had passed unto them, 1 Chron. xvii. 25, 27. 2 Chron. xx. 7, 8. Dan. ix. 2, 3.

Truth and fidelity in the care to make these promises good ; this is that which makes us so confidently trust in God's promises, because we know they are all yea and amen, that it is impossible for God to lie, or deceive, or for any to seek his face in vain, 2 Cor. i. 20. Josh. xxi. 45. Heb. vi. 18. Isa. xlv. 19.

Power to give being and put into act whatsoever is thus promised. That which a man leans upon must have strength to bear the weight which is laid upon it. This is the great ground of our trusting in God at all times, even then when all other helps fail ; because he is I AM, who can create and give a being to every thing which he hath promised, because power belongeth unto him, and in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, and nothing is too hard, no help too great for him who made heaven and earth, and can command all the creatures which he made to serve those whom he is pleased to help, Psa. lxii. 8. 11. Exod. iii. 14. Isa. xxvi. 4. Gen. xviii. 14. Jer. xxxii. 17. Psa. cxxi. 2. Rom. v. 19. 21. Matt. viii. 2. Now whosoever seeks for any of these grounds of trust in idols shall be sure to fail of them. Knowledge they have none, Isa. xlv. 9. and therefore love they have none ; for how can that love any thing which knows nothing ? Truth they have none, neither of being in themselves, nor of promise to those that trust in them ; the very form of an idol is to be a lie, to stand for that which it is not, and to present that which it is most unlike, Isa. xlv. 20. xl. 18. Jer. x. 14—16. and power they have none either to hear or save, Isa. xlv. 20. xlv. 7. xli. 23, 24. 28, 29. And therefore

that repentance which shaketh off confidence in idols, doth not only convert a man unto God, but unto himself; it is not only an impious, but a sottish thing, and below the reason of a man first to make a thing and then to worship it, to expect safety from that which did receive being from himself, Isa. xlv. 6, 7. These are the three great props of carnal confidence, foreign interests, domestic treasures, superstitious devotions; when men please themselves in the children of strangers, and have their land full of silver and gold, and treasures, full of horses and chariots, and full of idols; hoard up provisions and preparations of their own, comply with the enemies of God abroad, and corrupt the worship of God at home, Isa. ii. 6—8. These are the things for which God threateneth terribly to shake the earth, and to bring down, and to make low the loftiness of man, if he do not (as Ephraim here by long and sad experience doth) penitently renounce and abjure them all.

And now this is matter for which all of us may be humbled. There is no sin more usual amongst men than carnal confidence, to lean on our own wisdom, or wealth, or power, or supplies from others; to deify counsels, and armies, or horses, and treasures, and to let our hearts rise or fall, sink or bear up within us, according as the creature is helpful or useless, nearer or farther from us: as if God were not a God afar off as well as near at hand. This we may justly fear God has visited, and still will visit us for, because we do not sanctify the Lord of hosts himself in our hearts, to make him our fear and our defence, and that he will blow upon all such counsels and preparations as carnal confidence doth deify.

Therefore we must be exhorted to take off our hopes and fears from second causes, not to glory in an arm

of flesh, or to droop when that fails us ; not to say in our prosperity, Our mountain is so strong that we shall not be shaken, nor in our sufferings that our wound is incurable, or our grave so deep that we shall never be raised again. But to make the name of the Lord our strong tower ; for they who know his name will trust in him ; and for direction herein we must learn to trust in God.

[1.] Absolutely and for himself, because he only is absolute and of himself. Other things as they have their being, so have they their working and power of doing good or evil only from him, Matt. iv. 4. John xix. 11. And therefore till he take himself away, though he take all other things away from us, we have matter of encouragement and rejoicing in the Lord still, as David and Habakkuk resolve, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. Hab. iii. 17, 18. All the world cannot take away any promise from any servant of God, and there is more reality in the least promise of God than in the greatest performance of the creature.

[2.] To trust him in the way of his commandments, not in any precipices or presumptions of our own : “ Trust in him and do good,” Psa. xxxvii. 3. First fear him, and then trust in him ; he is a help and shield only unto such, Psa. cxv. 11. It is high insolence for any man to lean upon God without his leave, and he alloweth none to do it but such as fear him, and obey the voice of his servants, Isa. l. 10.

[3.] To trust him in the way of his providence ; and the use of such means as he hath sanctified and appointed. Though man liveth not by bread alone, but by the word of blessing which proceedeth out of the mouth of God ; yet that word is by God annexed to bread and not to stones ; and that man would not trust God, but mock and tempt him, who should expect to

have stones turned unto bread. If God hath provided stairs, it is not faith but fury, not confidence but madness, to go down by a precipice ; where God prescribes means and affords secondary helps, we must obey his order and implore his blessing in the use of them. This was Nehemiah's way, he prayed to God, and he petitioned the king, Neh. ii. 4. This was Esther's way, a fast to call upon God, and a feast to obtain favour with the king, Est. iv. 16. v. 4. This was Jacob's way, a supplication to God, and a present to his brother, Gen. xxxii. 9. 13. This was David's way against Goliath, the name of the Lord his trust, and yet a sling and a stone his weapon, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. 49. This was Gideon's way against the Midianites, his sword must go along with the sword of the Lord, not as an addition of strength, but as a testimony of obedience, Jud. vii. 18. Prayer is called sometimes a lifting up of the voice, sometimes a lifting up of the hands, to teach us, that when we pray to God we must as well have a hand to work as a tongue to beg. In a word, we must use second causes in obedience to God's order, not in confidence of their help ; the creature must be the object of our diligence, but God only the object of our trust.

We will now consider the ground of the church's prayer and promise, from which we learn, that the way unto mercy is to be in ourselves fatherless. "The poor," saith David, "committeth himself unto thee, thou art the helper of the fatherless," Psal. x. 14. cxlvi. 9. When Jehoshaphat knew not what to do, then was a fit time to direct his eye unto God, 2 Chron. xx. 19. When the stones of Sion are in the dust, then is the fittest time for God to favour her, Psal. cii. 13. When Israel was under heavy bondage, and

had not Joseph as a tender father (as he is called, Gen. xli. 43.) to provide for them, then God remembered that he was their Father, and Israel his first-born, Exod. iv. 22. nothing will make us seek for help above ourselves, but the apprehension of weakness within ourselves. Those creatures that are weakest, nature hath put an aptitude and inclination in them to depend upon those that are stronger. The vine, the ivy, the hop, the woodbine, are taught by nature to clasp and cling and wind about stronger trees. The greater sense we have of our own vileness, the fitter disposition are we in to rely on God, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord," Zeph. iii. 12. Isa. xiv. 32. When a man is proud within, and hath anything of his own to lean upon, he will hardly tell how to trust in God, Prov. iii. 5. xxviii. 25. Israel never thought of returning to her first husband, till her way was hedged up with thorns, and no means left to enjoy her former lovers, Hos. ii. 6, 7. When the enemy should have shut up and intercepted all her passages to Dan and Bethel, to Egypt and Assyria, that she hath neither friends nor idols to fly to, then she would think of returning to her first husband, namely, to God again.

Now from hence we learn :

I. The condition of the church in this world, which is to be as an orphan, destitute of all succour and favour, as an outcast whom no man looketh after, Jer. xxx. 17. Paul had low thoughts of the world, and the world thought as basely of him. "The world," saith he, "is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," Gal. vi. 14. Before conversion the world is an Egypt unto us, a place of bondage ; after conversion

it is a wilderness unto us, a place of emptiness and temptations.

II. The backwardness of man towards grace ; we go not to God till we are brought to extremities and all other helps fail us. The poor prodigal never thought of looking after a father, till he found himself in a fatherless condition, and utterly destitute of all relief, Luke xv. 17, 18.

III. The right disposition and preparation unto mercy, which is to be an orphan, destitute of all self-confidence, and broken off from all other comforts. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, I the Lord will hear them," Isa. xli. 17. God will "repent for his people when he seeth that their power is gone," Deut. xxxii. 36. when there is an extremity fit for divine power to interpose. Christ is set forth as a physician, which supposeth sickness ; as a fountain, which supposeth uncleanness ; as meat, which supposeth emptiness ; as clothing, which supposeth nakedness. He never finds us till we are lost sheep ; when we have lost all, then we are fit to follow him, and not before.

IV. The roots of true repentance. The sense of want and emptiness in ourselves, the apprehension of favour and mercy in God. Conviction of sin in us, and of righteousness in him, John xvi. 9, 10. Of crookedness in us, and of glory in him, Isa. xl. 4, 5.

Hereby room is made for the entertainment of mercy ; where sin abounds, grace will more abound ; and the more the soul finds itself exceedingly miserable, the more will the mercy of God appear exceedingly merciful, Rom. v. 20. and hereby God sheweth his wisdom in the seasonable dispensing of mercy then when we are in the greatest extremity, as fire is hottest

in the coldest weather. God delights to be seen in the mount, at the grave, to have his way in the sea, and his paths in the deep waters. Mercies are never so sweet as when they are seasonable, and never so seasonable as in the very turning and critical point, when misery weighs down, and nothing but mercy turns the scale.

This teacheth us how to fit ourselves for the mercy of God, namely, to find ourselves destitute of all inward or outward comforts, and to seek for it only there : beggars do not put on scarlet but rags to prevail with men for relief ; as Benhadad's servants put on ropes when they would beg mercy of the king of Israel. In a shipwreck a man will not load him with money, chains, treasure, rich apparel ; but commit himself to the sea naked, and esteem it mercy enough to have one poor plank to carry him to the shore. It is not exaltation enough unto Joseph, except he be taken out of a prison unto honour.

Neither should we be broken with diffidence or distrust in times of trouble, but remember it is the condition of the church to be an orphan. It is the way whereby Moses came to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter ; when his own parents durst not own him, the mercy of a princess found him out to advance him ; and when he was nearest unto perishing, he was nearest unto honour. In the civil law we find provision made for such as were cast out, and exposed to the wide world, some hospitals to entertain them, some liberties to comfort and compensate their trouble. And a like care we find in Christ : the Jews had no sooner cast out the man that was born blind, whose parents durst not be seen in his cause for fear of the like usage, the mercy of Christ presently found him and bestowed comfort upon him, John ix. 35. This is the true

David, unto whom all helpless persons that are in distress, in debt, in bitterness of soul, may resort and find entertainment, 1 Sam. xxii. 2.

Lastly, we should learn to behave ourselves as pupils under such a Guardian, to be sensible of our infancy, minority, inability to order or direct our own ways, and so deny ourselves, and not lean on our own wisdom ; to be sensible how this condition exposeth us to the injuries of strangers, " for because we are called out of the world, therefore the world hateth us," and so to be vigilant over our ways, and not trust ourselves alone in the hands of temptation, nor wander from our Guardian, but always to yield unto his wisdom and guidance. Lastly, to comfort ourselves in this, that while we are in our minority we are under the mercy of a father. A mercy of conservation by his providence, giving us all good things richly to enjoy, even all things necessary unto life and godliness : a mercy of protection, defending us by his power from all evil : a mercy of education and instruction, teaching us by his word and Spirit : a mercy of communion, many ways familiarly conversing with us and manifesting himself unto us : a mercy of guidance and government by the laws of his family : a mercy of discipline, fitting us by fatherly chastisements for those further honours and employments he will advance us unto ; and when our minority is over, and we are once come to a perfect man, we shall then be actually admitted unto that inheritance immortal, invisible, and that fadeth not away, which the same mercy at first purchased, and now prepareth and reserveth for us. Now it followeth :

Verse 4. " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him."

In the former words we have considered both

Israel's petition in time of trouble, and the promise and covenant which thereupon they bind themselves in. In these and the following words unto the end of the eighth verse, we have the gracious answer of God to both, promising both in his free love to grant their petition, and by his free grace to enable them unto the performance of the covenant which they had made.

The petition consisted of two parts. 1. That God would take away all iniquity. 2. That he would do them good, or receive them graciously. To both these God giveth them a full and a gracious answer. 1. That he will take away all iniquity by healing their backsliding. 2. That he would do them good and heap all manner of blessings upon them, which are expressed by the various metaphors of fruitfulness, opposite to the contrary expressions of judgment in former parts of the prophecy.

“I will heal their backsliding.” This is one of the names by which God is pleased to make-himself known unto his people, “I am the Lord that healeth thee,” Exod. xv. 26. And, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings,” Jer. iii. 22.

Now God healeth sin four manner of ways :

1. By a gracious pardon, burying, covering, not imputing them unto us. So it seems to be expounded, Psa. ciii. 3. and that which is called healing in one place, is called forgiveness in another, if we compare Matt. xiii. 15. with Mark iv. 12.

2. By a spiritual and effectual reformation, purging the conscience from dead works, making it strong and able to serve God in new obedience; for that which health is to the body, holiness is to the soul. Therefore the Sun of righteousness is said to arise with healing in his wings, Mal. iv. 2. whereby we are to understand the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit

conveying the virtue of the blood of Christ unto the conscience, even as the beams of the sun do the heat and influence thereof unto the earth, thereby calling out the herbs and flowers, and healing those deformities which winter had brought upon it.

3. By removing and withdrawing of judgments, which the sins of a people had brought like wounds or sicknesses upon them. So healing is opposite to smiting and wounding, Deut. xxxii. 39. Job v. 18. Hos. vi. 1, 2. Jer. xxxiii. 5, 6.

4. By comforting against the anguish and distress which sin is apt to bring upon the conscience. For as medicines cleanse away corrupt humours, so cordials likewise strengthen and refresh weak and dejected patients; and this is one of Christ's principal works to bind and heal the broken in heart, to restore comforts unto mourners, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to have mercy upon those whose bones are vexed, Psa. cxlvii. 3. Isa. lvii. 18, 19. Luke iv. 18. Psa. vi. 2, 3. I am not willing to shut any of these out of the meaning of the text. 1. Because it is an answer to that prayer, "Take away all iniquity." The all that is in it, the guilt, the stain, the power, the punishment, the anguish, whatever evil it is apt to bring upon the conscience: let it not do us any hurt at all. 2. Because God's works are perfect; where he forgives sin he removes it, where he convinceth of righteousness, unto pardon of sin, he convinceth also of judgment, unto the casting out of the prince of this world, and bringeth forth that judgment unto victory, Matt. xii. 20.

"Their backsliding." Their prayer was against all iniquity, and God in his answer thereunto singlenth out one kind of iniquity, but one of the greatest by name:

1. And that to teach them and us when we pray against sin, not to content ourselves with generalities, but to bewail our great and special sins by name, those specially that have been most comprehensive and the seminaries of many others.

2. To comfort them; for if God pardon by name the greatest sin, then surely none of the rest will stand in the way of his mercy; if he forgive the talents, we need not doubt but he will forgive the pence too. Paul was guilty of many other sins, but when he will magnify the grace of Christ, he makes mention of his great sins: a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious; and comforts himself in the mercy which he had obtained against them, 1 Tim. i. 13.

3. To intimate the great guilt of apostacy and rebellion against God. After we have known him and tasted of his mercy, and given up ourselves unto his service, and come out of Egypt and Sodom, then to look back again and to be false to his covenant, this God looks on, not as a single sin, but as a compound of all sins. When a man turns from God, he doth as it were resume and take home upon his conscience all the sins of his life again.

4. To proportion his answer to their repentance. They confess their apostacy, they had been in covenant with God, they confess he was their first husband, Hos. ii. 7. and they forsook him, and sought to horses, to men, to idols, to vanity and lies: this is the sin they chiefly bewail; and therefore this is the sin which God chiefly singles out to pardon and to heal them of. This is the great goodness of God towards those who pray in sincerity, that he fits his mercy to answer them in the main of their desires, let it be unto them even as they will.

‘ I will love them freely.’ This is set down as the

fountain of that remission, sanctification, and comfort which is here promised. It comes not from our conversion unto God, but from God's free love and grace unto us. And this is added:

1. To humble them that they should not ascribe anything to themselves, their repentance, their prayers, their covenants and promises, as if these had been the means to procure mercy for them, or as if there were any objective grounds of loveliness in them to stir up the love of God towards them. It is not for their sake that he doth it, but for his own, "The Lord sets his love upon them because he loved them," Deut. vii. 7, 8. "Not for your sakes do I this," saith the Lord God, "be it known unto you," Ezek. xxxvi. 22. "He will have mercy because he will have mercy," Rom. ix. 15.

2. To support them, above the guilt of their greatest sins. Men think nothing more easy while they live in sin, and are not affected with the weight and heinousness of it, than to believe mercy and pardon. But when the soul in conversion unto God, feels the heavy burden of some great sins, when it considers its rebellion and apostacy, and backsliding from God, it will then be very apt to think God will not forgive or heal so great wickedness as this. There is a natural Novatianism* in the timorous conscience of convinced sinners, to doubt and question pardon for sins of apostacy and falling after repentance. Therefore in this case God takes a penitent off from the consideration of himself by his own thoughts, unto the height and excellency of His thoughts, who knows how to pardon abundantly, Isa. lv. 7—9. Jer. xxix. 11. Ezek. xxxvii. 3. Nothing is too hard for love, especially

* Excessive strictness.

free love, that hath no foundation or inducements from without itself.

And because we read it before, Hos. viii. 5. that God's anger was kindled against them, therefore he here adds that this also should be turned away from them. Anger will consist with love; we find God angry with Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam, and Asa, and he doth sometimes visit with rods and scourges, where he doth not utterly take away his loving-kindness from a people, Psa. lxxxix. 32, 33. A man may be angry with his wife, or child, or friend, whom yet he dearly loveth. And God is said to be thus angry with his people, when the effects of displeasure are discovered towards them. Now, upon their repentance and conversion, God promiseth not only to love them freely, but to clear up his countenance towards them, to make them by the removal of judgments to see and know the fruits of his free love and bounty unto them. When David called Absalom home from banishment, this was an effect of love; but when he said, "Let him not see my face," this was the continuation of anger; but at last when he admitted him into his presence and kissed him, here that anger was turned away from him too, 2 Sam. xiv. 21. 24. 33.

These words then contain God's merciful answer to the first part of Israel's prayer for the taking away of all iniquity, which had been the fountain of those sad judgments under which they languished and pined away. Wherein there are two parts, 1. The ground of God's love. 2. A double fruit of that love—in healing their backsliding, in removing his anger and heavy judgments from them. We will briefly handle them in the order of the text.

"I will heal their backsliding." When God's people do return unto him, and pray against sin, then

God out of his free love doth heal them of it. First, he teacheth them what to ask, and then he tells them what he will give. Thus we find conversion and healing joined together. "They shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them and shall heal them," Isa. xix. 22. "Return, ye backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings," Jer. iii. 22. Men, if they be injured and provoked by those whom they have in their power to undo, though they return and are ready to ask forgiveness, yet many times, out of pride and revenge, will take their time and opportunity to repay the wrong. But God doth not so, his pardons, as all his other gifts, are without upbraiding: as soon as ever his servants come back unto him with tears and confession, he looks not upon them with scorn but with joy; his mercy makes more haste to embrace them, than their repentance to return unto him, Luke xv. 20. then out comes the wine, the oil, the balm, the cordials; then the wounds of a Saviour do, as it were, bleed afresh to drop in mercy into the sores of such a penitent. O though he be not a dutiful, not a pleasant child, yet he is a child; though I "spake against him, yet I remember him still, my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him," Jer. xxxi. 20. The Lord greatly complains of the inclination of his people to backsliding, and yet he cannot find in his heart to destroy them, but expresseth a kind of conflict between justice and mercy; and at last resolves, I am God and not man; I can as well heal their backsliding by my love, as revenge it by my justice; therefore "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, but I will cause them to walk after the Lord," Hos. xi. 7. 10. Yea, so merciful he is, that even upon a hypocritical conversion, when his people did but flatter and lie unto him, and

their heart was not right towards him, nor they stedfast in his covenant, yet the text saith, "He being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity," (not as to the justification of their persons, for that is never without faith unfeigned, but so far as to the mitigation of their punishment, that he destroyed them not, nor stirred up all his wrath against them, Psa. lxxviii. 34. 39.) for so that place is to be expounded, as appeareth by the like parallel place, Ezek. xx. 17. "Nevertheless, mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness."

Now the metaphorical word both here and so often elsewhere, used in this argument, leadeth us to look upon sinners as patients, and upon God as a physician. By which two considerations we shall find the exceeding mercy of God in the pardon and purging away of sin set forth unto us.

Healing, then, is a relative word, and leads us first to the consideration of a patient who is to be healed, and that is here a grievous sinner fallen into a relapse. Healing is of two sorts: the healing of a sickness by a physician, the healing of a wound by a surgeon: and sin is both a sickness and a wound. The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores, Isa. i. 3. 6. a sickness that wants healing, a wound that wants binding, Ezek. xxxiv. 4. a sick sinner that wants a physician to call to repentance, Matt. ix. 12, 13. a wounded sinner that wants a Samaritan (so the Jews called Christ, John viii. 48.) to bind up and pour in wine and oil, Luke x. 34.

Diseases are of several sorts, but those of all others most dangerous that are in the vital parts, as all the diseases of sin are, and from thence spread themselves

over the whole man. Ignorance, pride, carnal principles, corrupt judgment, diseases of the head ; hardness, stubbornness, atheism, rebellion, diseases of the heart ; lust, a dart in the liver ; corrupt communication, the effect of putrefied lungs ; gluttony and drunkenness, the swellings and dropsy of the belly ; despair and horror, the grief of the bowels ; apostacy, a relapse into all : an ear that cannot hear God speak, Jer. vi. 10. an eye quite daubed up that cannot see him strike, Isa. xxvi. 11. a palate out of taste, that cannot savour nor relish heavenly things, Rom. viii. 5. lips poisoned, Rom. iii. 13. a tongue set on fire, Jam. iii. 6. flesh consumed ; bones sticking out, sore vexed and broken to pieces, Job xxxiii. 21. Psal. vi. 2. li. 8. Some diseases are dull, others acute ; some stupifying, others tormenting : sin is all ; a stupifying palsy that takes away feeling, Eph. iv. 19. a plague in the heart which sets all on fire, 1 Kings viii. 38. Hos. vii. 4.

Let us consider a little the proper passions and effects of most diseases, and see how they suit to sin.

1. Pain and distemper. This, first or last, is in all sin ; for it begets in wicked and impenitent men the pain of guilt, horror, trembling of heart, anguish of conscience, fear of wrath, expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, as in Cain, Pharaoh, Ahab, Felix, and divers others, Gen. iv. 13, 14. Exod. ix. 27, 28. 1 Kings xxi. 27. Acts xxiv. 25. Isa. xxxiii. 14. Heb. ii. 15. Rom. viii. 15. Heb. x. 27. And in penitent men it begets the pain of shame and sorrow, and inquietude of spirit, a wound in the spirit, a prick in the very heart, Rom. vi. 21. Ezek. xvi. 61. 2 Cor. vii. 10. Prov. xviii. 14. Acts ii. 37. Penitence and pain are words of one derivation, and are very near of kin unto

one another. Never was any wound cured without pain, never any sin healed without sorrow.

2. Weakness and indisposedness to the actions of life. Sin is like an unruly spleen, or a greedy wen in the body that sucks all nourishment, and converts all supplies into its own growth, and so exhausts the strength and vigour of the soul, making it unfit and unable to do any good. Whenever it sets about any duty, till sin be cured, it goes about it like an arm out of joint, which when you would move it one way, doth fall back another. It faints, and flags, and is not able to put forth any skill or any delight unto any good duty. Naturally men are reprobate or void of judgment unto any good work, Tit. i. 16. Godliness is a mystery, a spiritual skill and trade; there is learning, and use, and experience, and much exercise required to be handsome and dexterous about it, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Heb. v. 13, 14. To be sinners, and to be without strength, in the apostle's phrase, is all one, Rom. v. 6. 8. And look how much flesh there is in any man, so much disability is there to perform any thing that is good, Rom. vii. 18. Therefore the hands of sinners are said to hang down, and their knees to be feeble, and their feet to be lame, that cannot make straight paths till they be healed, Heb. xii. 12, 13. If they at any time upon natural dictates, or some sudden strong conviction, or pang of fear, or stirrings of conscience, do offer at any good work, to pray, to repent, to believe, to obey, they bungle at it, and are out of their element. "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." They presently grow weary of any essays and offers at well-doing, and cannot hold out or persevere in them.

3. Decay and consumption. Sin wastes and wears out the vigour of soul and body, feeds upon all our

time and strength, and exhausts it in the services of lust. Sickness is a chargeable thing, a consumption at once to the person and to the estate. The poor woman in the gospel who had an issue of blood, spent all that she had on physicians and was never the better, Luke viii. 43. So poor sinners empty all the powers of soul, of body, of time, of estate, every thing within their reach upon their lusts, and are as unsatisfied at last as at the first, Ecc. i. 8. Like a silkworm which works out his bowels into such a mass wherein himself is buried. It weareth them out, and sucketh away the radical strength in the service of it. and yet never giveth them over : but as Pharaoh's taskmasters exacted the brick when they had taken away the straw ; so lust doth consume and weaken natural strength in the obedience of it : and yet when nature is exhausted, the strength of lust is as great, and the commands as tyrannous as ever before, Isa. lvii. 10. Jer. ii. 25. We are to distinguish between the vital force of the faculties, and the activity of lust which sets them on work ; that decays and hastens to death, but sin retains its strength and vigour still ; nothing kills that but the blood of Christ, and the decay of nature ariseth out of the strength of sin ; the more any man, in any lust whatsoever, makes himself a servant of sin, and the more busy and active he is in that service, the more will it eat into him and consume him ; as the hotter the fever is, the sooner is the body wasted and dried up by it.

4. Deformity. Sickness withereth the beauty of the body, maketh it of a glorious, a ghastly and loathsome spectacle. Come to the comeliest person living after a long and pining sickness, and you shall not find the man in his own shape ; a wan countenance, a shrivelled flesh, a lean visage, a hollow and standing

eye, a trembling hand, a stammering tongue, a bowed back, a feeble knee, nothing left but the stakes of the hedge and a few sinews to hold them together. Behold here the picture of a sinner swelled with pride, pined with envy, bowed with earthliness, wasted and eaten up with lust, made as stinking and unsavoury as a dead carcase, Psa. xiv. 3. When thou seest an unmerciful man, that hath no compassion left in him, think thou sawest Judas or king Jehoram, whose sore disease made his bowels fall out, 2 Chron. xxi. 19. When thou seest a worldly man whose heart is glued to earthly things, think upon the poor woman who was bowed together, and could not lift up herself, Luke xiii. 11. When thou seest a hypocrite walking crookedly in the ways of God, think upon Mephibosheth or Asa, lame, halting, diseased in their feet. When thou seest a proud, ambitious man, think upon Herod eaten up with worms. Oh if the diseases of the soul could come forth and show themselves in the body and work such deformity there (where it would not do a thousandth part so much hurt) as they do within; if a man could in the glass of the word see the ugliness of the one as plainly as in a material glass the foulness of the other, how would this make him cry out, My head, my head; my bowels, my bowels; my leanness, my leanness; unclean, unclean, unclean! No man thinks any shape ugly enough to represent the devil by; yet take him in his natural state, and he was a most glorious creature: it is sin that turns him into a serpent or dragon. There is something of the monster in every sin; the belly or the feet set in the place of the head or heart; sensual and worldly lusts set up above reason; and corrupt reason above grace.

Now because the sickness here spoken of is a

falling sickness, and that the worst kind of fall; not forward in our way or race, as every good man sometimes falls, where a man hath the help of his knees and hands to break the blow, to prevent or lessen the hurt, and to make him to rise again; but old Eli falls a falling backward, where a man can put forth no part to save the whole, and so doth more dangerously break and bruise himself thereby. Therefore as it is a sickness which requires curing, so it is a wound which requires healing and binding. The ancients compare it to falling into a pit full of dirt and stones: where a man doth not only defile, but miserably break and bruise himself. There are all the evils of a dangerous and mortal wound.

Add to all this, that in this diseased and wounded condition, 1. A man hath no power to heal or to help himself, but in that respect he must cry out with the prophet, "My wound is incurable, and refuseth to be healed," Jer. xv. 18. 2. He hath no desire, no will, no thought to inquire or send after a physician who may heal him, but is well contented rather to continue as he is than to be put to the pain and trouble of a cure, and pleaseth himself in the goodness of his own condition, Rev. iii. 17. 3. He is in the hands of his cruel enemy, who takes no pity on him, but by flattery and tyranny and new temptations continually cherisheth the disease. 4. When the true physician comes, he shuts the door against him, refuseth his counsel, rejecteth his receipts, quarrels with his medicines; they are too bitter, or too strong and purifying, or too sharp and searching; he will not be healed at all except it may be his own way. Prov. i. 24, 25. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. Ezek. xxiv. 13. Matt. xxiii. 37. Jer. xiii. 11. Thus we have taken a view of the patient, sick, weak, pained, con-

sumed, deformed, wounded, and sore bruised ; without power or help at home, without friends abroad : no sense of danger, no desire of change ; patient of his disease, impatient of his cure ; but one means in the world to help him, and he unable to procure it ; and being offered to him, unwilling to entertain it ; who can expect after all this but to hear the knell ring and to see the grave opened for such a sick person as this.

Now let us take a view of the physician. Surely an ordinary one would be so far from visiting such a patient, that in so desperate a condition as this he would quite forsake him, as their manner is to leave their patients when they lie a dying. Here then observe the singular goodness of this physician.

Though other physicians judge of the disease when it is brought unto them, yet the patient first feels it and complains of it himself ; but this physician giveth the patient the very feeling of his disease, and is fain to take notice of that as well as to minister the cure. " He went on frowardly in the way of his heart," saith the Lord, and pleased himself in his own ill condition ; " I have seen his ways, and will heal him," Isa. lvii. 17, 18.

Also observe, other patients send for the physician, and use many entreaties to be visited and undertaken by him. Here the physician comes unsent for, and entreats the sick person to be healed. The world is undone by falling off from God, and yet God is the first that begins reconciliation, and the obstacle to it is in the world and not in him : and therefore there is a great emphasis in the apostle's expression, " God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself ;" not himself unto the world. He entreats us to be reconciled, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. He is " found of them that sought

him not," Isa. lxxv. 1. and his office is not only to save, but to seek that which was lost.

Again, other physicians are well used, and entertained with respect and honour; but our patient here neglects and misuses his physician, falls from him, betakes himself unto pretenders and physicians of no value, yet he insists on his mercy, and comes when he is forsaken, when he is repelled, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people," Isa. lxxv. 2.

Further, other physicians have usually ample and honourable rewards for the attendance they give; but this physician comes out of love, heals freely, nay is bountiful to his patient, doth not only heal him but bestows gifts upon him, gives the visit, gives the medicine, sends the ministers and servants who watch and keep the patient.

Lastly, other physicians prescribe a bitter potion for the sick person to take, this physician drinketh off the bitterest himself; others prescribe the sore to be lanced, this physician is wounded and smitten himself; others order the patient to bleed, here the physician bleeds himself: yea, he is not only the physician but the medicine, and gives himself, his own flesh, his own blood, for a purifier, a cordial, a plaster to the soul of his patient; dies himself that his patient may live, and by his stripes we are healed, Isa. liii. 5.

We should from all this learn:

1. To admire the unsearchable riches of the mercy of our God, who is pleased in our misery to prevent^{*} us with goodness, and when we neither felt our disease nor desired a remedy, is pleased to convince us of our sins, "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity;" to invite

* Go before.

us to repentance, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God;" to put words into our mouth, and to draw our petition for us, "Take with you words and say unto him, Take away all iniquity," &c. to furnish us with arguments, we are fatherless, thou art merciful; to encourage us with promises, "I will heal, I will love;" to give us his ministers to proclaim, and his Spirit to apply these mercies unto us. If he did not convince us that iniquity would be a downfall and a ruin unto us, Ezek. xviii. 30. we should hold it fast and be pleased with our disease, like a madman who quarrels with his cure, and had rather continue mad than be healed, Job iii. 19—21.

If being convinced he did not invite us to repentance, we should run away from him as Adam did. No man loves to be in the company of an enemy, much less when that enemy is a judge. "They have turned their back unto me, and not their face," Jer. ii. 27. Adam will hide himself "from the presence of the Lord," Gen. iii. 8. and Cain "will go out from the presence of the Lord," Gen. iv. 16. Guilt cannot look upon majesty, stubble dares not come near the fire; if we be in our sins, we cannot stand before God, Ezra ix. 15.

If being invited, he did not put words into our mouths, we should not know what to say unto him. We know not wherewith to come before the Lord, or to bow before the high God, if he do not show us what is good, Mic. vi. 6. 8. Where God is the Judge, who cannot be mocked or derided, who knoweth all things, and if our heart condemn us, he is greater than our hearts, and wherever we hide can find us out and make our sin to find us too, Gal. vi. 7. 1 John iii. 20. Num. xxxii. 23. where, I say, this God is the Judge, there guilt stoppeth the mouth and maketh the sinner

speechless, Matt. xxii. 12. Rom. iii. 19. nay, the best of us "know not to pray as we ought, except the Spirit be pleased to help our infirmities," Rom. viii. 26. When we are taught what to say, if God do not withdraw his anger we shall never be able to reason with him, Job ix. 13, 14. "Withdraw thine hand from me, let not thy dread make me afraid, then I will answer, then I will speak," Job xiii. 21, 22. If he do not reveal mercy, if he do not promise love or healing; if he do not make it appear that he is a God who heareth prayers, flesh will not dare to come near unto him, 2 Sam. vii. 27. We can never pray till we can cry, Abba, Father! we can never call unto him but in the multitude of his mercies. As the earth is shut and bound up by frost and cold, and putteth not forth her precious fruits till the warmth and heat of the summer call them out: so the heart under the cold affections of fear and guilt, under the dark apprehensions of wrath and judgment, is so contracted that it knows not to draw near to God; but when mercy shines, when the love of God is shed abroad in it, then also is the heart itself shed abroad and enlarged to pour out itself unto God. Even when distressed sinners pray, their prayer proceeds from apprehensions of mercy, for prayer is the child of faith, Rom. x. 14. James v. 15. and the object of faith is mercy.

2. The way to prize this mercy is to grow acquainted with our own sickness; to see our face in the glass of the law; to consider how odious it renders us to God; how desperately miserable in ourselves. The deeper the sense of misery, the higher the estimation of mercy. When the apostle looked on himself as the chief of sinners, then he accounted it a "saying worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim.

i. 15. Till we be sick and weary we shall not look after a physician to heal and ease us, Matt. ix. 12. xi. 28. till we be pricked in our hearts we shall not be hasty to inquire after the means of salvation, Acts ii. 37. Though the proclamation of pardon be made to all that will, Rev. xxii. 17. yet none are willing till they are brought to extremities: as men cast not their goods into the sea, till they see they must perish themselves, if they do not. Some men must be bound before they can be cured. All that God doth to us in conversion, he doth most freely; but a gift is not a gift till it be received, Rom. v. 17. John i. 12. and we naturally refuse and reject Christ when he is offered, Isa. liii. 3. John i. 11. because he is not offered but upon these terms—that we deny ourselves, and take up a cross, and follow him. Therefore we must be wrought upon by some terror or other, 2 Cor. v. 11. When we find the wrath of God abiding upon us, and our souls shut under it as in a prison, John iii. 36. Gal. iii. 22. and the fire of it working and boiling like poison in our consciences, then we shall value mercy and cry for it as the prophet doth; “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for thou art my praise,” Jer. xvii. 14. Things necessary are never to be valued to their uttermost but in extremities. When there is a great famine in Samaria, an ass’s head (which at another time is thrown out for carrion) will be more worth than in a plentiful season the whole body of an ox. Nay, hunger shall in such a case over vote nature, and devour the very tender love of a mother; the life of a child shall not be so dear to the heart, as his flesh to the palate of a pined parent, 2 Kings vi. 25. 28. As soon as a man finds a shipwreck, a famine, a hell in his soul, till Christ save, feed, deliver it, immediately

Christ will be the desire of that soul, and nothing in heaven or earth valued in comparison of him : then that which was esteemed the foolishness of preaching before, shall be counted the power of God, and the wisdom of God ; then every one of Christ's ordinances, which are the waters of the temple, for the healing of the sea, that is, of many people, Ezek. xlvii. 8. and the leaves of the tree of life, which are for the healing of nations, Rev. xxii. 2. and the streams of that fountain which is opened in Israel for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. and the wings of the Sun of righteousness, whereby he conveyeth healing to his church, Mal. iv. 2. shall be esteemed, as indeed they are, the riches, the glory, the treasure, the feast, the physic, the salvation of such a soul, Eph. iii. 8. 2 Cor. iii. 8. 11. iv. 6, 7. Isa. xxv. 6. Rev. xix. 9. Luke iv. 18. Heb. ii. 3. James i. 21. John xii. 50. Acts xxviii. 28. And a man will wait on them with as much diligence and attention as ever the impotent people did at the pool of Bethesda, when the angel stirred the water ; and endure the healing severity of them, not only with patience, but with love and thankfulness ; suffer reason to be captivated, will to be crossed, high imaginations to be cast down, every thought to be subdued, conscience to be searched, heart to be purified, lust to be cut off and mortified ; in all things will such a sick soul be contented to be dieted, restrained, and ordered by the counsel of this heavenly physician.

It is here next to be noted, that God promiseth to heal their backslidings. The word imports a departing from God, or a turning away again. It is quite contrary in the formal nature of it unto faith and repentance, and implies that which the apostle calls a repenting of repentance, 2 Cor. vii. 10. By faith we

come to Christ, John vi. 37. and cleave to him, and lay hold upon him, Heb. vi. 18. Isa. lvi. 2. 6. but by this we depart, and draw back from him, and let him go, Heb. x. 38, 39. By the one we prize Christ as infinitely precious, and his ways as holy and good, Phil. iii. 8. 2 Pet. i. 4. by the other we vilify and set them at naught, stumble at them as ways that do not profit, Matt. xxi. 42. Acts iv. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Job xxi. 14, 15. For a man having approved of God's ways, and entered into covenants with him, after this to go from his word and fling up his bargain, and start aside like a deceitful bow: of all other dispositions of the soul this is one of the worst, to deal with our sins as Israel did with their servants, Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11. dismiss them, and then take them again. It is the sad fruit of an evil and unbelieving heart, Heb. iii. 12. And God threateneth such persons to "lead them forth with the workers of iniquity," Psa. cxxv. 5. as cattle are led to slaughter, or malefactors to execution. And yet we here see God promiseth healing unto such sinners.

For understanding whereof we are to know that there is a twofold apostacy. The one out of impotency of affection, and prevalency of lust, drawing the heart to look towards the old pleasures thereof again, and it is a recidivation or relapse into a former sinful condition out of forgetfulness and falseness of heart, for want of the fear of God to balance the conscience, and to fix and unite the heart unto him: which was the frequent sin of Israel, to make many promises and covenants unto God, and to break them as fast, Judg. ii. 11, 12. Psa. cvi. 7, 8. 11—13. And this falling from our first love, growing cold and slack in duty, breaking our engagements unto God, and returning again to folly, though it be, like a relapse after

a disease, exceedingly dangerous, yet God is sometimes pleased to forgive and heal it.

The other kind of apostacy is proud and malicious : when, after the taste of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, men set themselves to hate, oppose, persecute godliness, to do despite to the Spirit of grace, to fling off the holy strictness of Christ's yoke, to swell against the searching power of his word, to trample upon the blood of the covenant ; and when they know the spiritualness and holiness of God's ways, the innocency and piety of his servants, do yet notwithstanding set themselves against them for that reason, though under other pretences. This is not a weak but a wilful, and, if I may so speak, a strong and a stubborn apostacy. A sin which wholly hardeneth the heart against repentance, and by consequence is incurable. To speak against the Son of man, that is, against the doctrine, disciples, ways, servants of Christ, looking on him only as a man, the leader of a sect, as master of a new way, (which was Paul's notion of Christ and christian religion when he persecuted it, and for which cause he found mercy, for had he done that knowingly, which he did ignorantly, it had been a sin incapable of mercy, Acts xxvi. 9. 1 Tim. i. 13.) thus to sin, is a blasphemy that may be pardoned : but to speak against the Spirit, that is, to oppose and persecute the doctrine, worship, ways, servants of Christ, knowing them and acknowledging in them a spiritual holiness, and to do it, so that the formal motive of malice against them, is the power and lustre of that Spirit which appeareth in them ; and the formal principle of it, neither ignorance, nor self-ends, but very wilfulness, and immediate malignity ; wo be to that man whose natural enmity and antipathy against godliness do ever swell

to so great and daring a height ; “ It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come,” Matt. xii. 32. That is, say some, neither in the time of life, nor in the point or moment of death which translates them unto the world to come ; others, not in this life by justification, nor in the world to come by consummate redemption, and public judiciary absolution in the last day, which is therefore called the day of redemption, in which men are said to find mercy of the Lord, Eph. iv. 30. 2 Tim. i. 18. For that which is here done in the conscience by the ministry of the word, and efficacy of the Spirit, shall be then publicly and judicially pronounced by Christ’s own mouth before angels and men, 2 Cor. v. 10. Others suppose that it means, shall not be forgiven, that is, shall be plagued and punished both in this life and in that to come. Give me leave to add what I have conceived of the meaning of this place, though no way condemning the expositions of so great and learned men as have already given their opinion upon this text.

I take it, by “ this world,” we may understand the church which then was of the Jews, or the present age which our Saviour Christ then lived in. In the scripture, I think, the word age or world is to be sometimes restrained to the church. Now, as Israel was God’s first-born, and the first fruits of his increase, Exod. iv. 22. Jer. xxxi. 9. ii. 3. so the church of Israel is called the church of the first-born, Heb. xii. 23. and the first tabernacle, and a worldly sanctuary, Heb. ix. 1. 8. and Jerusalem that now is, Gal. iv. 25. And then by the world to come, we are to understand the christian church afterwards to be planted ; for so frequently in scripture is the evangelical church called the world to come, and the last days, and the ends of the world, and the things thereunto belonging. Things

to come which had been hidden from former ages and generations, and were by the ministry of the apostles made known unto the church in their time, which the prophets and righteous men of the former ages did not see nor attain unto. Thus it is said, "In these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son," Heb. i. 2. And, unto angels he did not put in subjection the world to come, Heb. ii. 5. and, Christ was made a High-priest of good things to come, Heb. ix. 11. and, the law had a shadow of good things to come, Heb. x. 1. and, the times of the gospel are called ages to come, Eph. ii. 7. and, the ends of the world, 1 Cor. x. 11. Thus legal and evangelical dispensations are usually distinguished by the names of times past, and the last days of times to come, Heb. i. 1. Eph. iii. 9, 10. Col. i. 25, 26. The one an earthly and temporary, the other a heavenly and abiding administration, and so the septuagint render the original word, Isa. ix. 6. "Everlasting Father," which is one of the names of Christ, The Father of the world to come.

The meaning then of the place seems to be this: That sins of high and desperate presumption, committed maliciously against known light, and against the evidence of God's Spirit, as they had no sacrifice or expiation allowed for them in the former world, or state of the Jewish church, but they who in that manner despised Moses and his law, though delivered but by angels, died without mercy, Num. xv. 27. 30, 31. Heb. ii. 2—4. so in the world to come, or in the evangelical church, (though grace should therein be more abundantly discovered and administered unto men,) yet the same law should continue still, as we find it did, Heb. ii. 2—5. vi. 4—6. x. 26—28. neither the open enemies of Christ in the one, nor the false

professors of Christ in the other, committing this sin, should be capable of pardon.

This doctrine of apostacy or backsliding, though worthy of a more large explication ; I shall here conclude with adding but two words more.

We should beware above all other sins, of this, of falling in soul as old Eli did in body, backward, and so hazarding our salvation ; if once we have shaken hands with sin, never take acquaintance with it any more, but say as Israel here, " What have I to do any more with idols ? " The church should be like mount Zion, that cannot be moved. It is a sad and sick temper of a church to toss from one side to another, and then especially when she should be healed, to be carried about with every wind.

Again, we should not be so terrified by any sin, which our soul mourns and labours under, and our heart turneth from, as thereby to be withheld from going to the physician for pardon and healing. Had he not great power and mercy, did he not love freely, without respect of persons, and pardon freely without respect of sins, we might then be afraid of going to him : but when he extendeth forgiveness to all kinds, iniquity, transgression, and sin, *Exod. xxxiv. 6.* and hath actually pardoned the greatest sinners, Manasses, Mary Magdalen, Paul, publicans, harlots, backsliders ; we should, though not presume hereupon to turn God's mercy into poison, and his grace into wantonness, (for mercy itself will not save those sinners that hold fast sin, and will not forsake it,) yet take heed of despairing, or entertaining low thoughts of the love and merey of God ; for such examples as these are set forth for the encouragement of all that shall ever believe unto eternal life, *1 Tim. i. 16.* And the thoughts and ways which God

hath to pardon sin, are above our thoughts and ways whereby we look on them in their guilt and greatness, many times, as unpardonable ; and, therefore, are fit matter for our faith, even against sense, to believe and rely upon, Isa. lv. lvii. lviii.

Now followeth the fountain of this mercy, " I will love them freely." God's love is a most free and bountiful love, having no motive or foundation but within itself, and his free love and grace is the ground of all his other mercies to his people ; he showeth mercy on whom he will, and because he will show mercy. From the beginning to the end of our salvation, nothing is primarily active but free grace : freely loved, Deut. vii. 7, 8. freely chosen, Eph. i. 5, 6. Christ, the gift of free love, John iii. 16. his obedience freely accepted for us, and bestowed upon us, Rom. v. 15. 18. justification free, Rom. iii. 24. adoption free, Eph. i. 5. faith and repentance free, Phil. i. 29. 2 Tim. ii. 25. good works free, Eph. ii. 10. salvation free, Tit. iii. 5. Acts xv. 1. Thus the foundation of all mercies is free love, We do not first give to God that he may render to us again. We turn, we pray, we covenant, we repent, we are holy, we are healed, only because he loves us : and he loves us, not because he sees any thing lovely or amiable in us, but because he will show the absoluteness of his own will, and the unsearchableness of his own counsel towards us. We are not originally denominated good by any thing which floweth from us, or is done by us ; but by that which is bestowed upon us. Our goodness is not the motive of his love, but his love the fountain of our goodness. None, indeed, are healed and saved, but those who repent and return ; but repentance is only a condition, and that freely given by God, disposing the subject for salvation ; not a cause moving or procuring God

to save us. It is necessary as the means to the end, not as the cause to the effect. That which looks least free of any other act of God, his rewarding of obedience, is all and only mercy. When we sow in righteousness, we must reap in mercy, Hos. x. 12. When he renders according to our works, it is because of his mercy, Psa. lxii. 12.

This is the solid foundation of all christian comfort, that God loves freely. Were his love to us to be measured by our fruitfulness or carriages towards him, each hour and moment might stagger our hope ; but he is therefore pleased to have it all of grace, that the promise might be made sure, Rom. iv. 16. This comforts us against the guilt of the greatest sins ; for love and free grace can pardon what it will. This comforts us against the accusations of Satan drawn from our own unworthiness. It is true, I am unworthy, and Satan cannot show me unto myself more vile, than without his accusations I will acknowledge myself to be : but that love which gave Christ freely, doth give in him more worthiness than there is or can be unworthiness in me. This comforts us in the assured hope of glory, because when he loves, he loves to the end, and nothing can separate from his love. This comforts us in all afflictions, that the free love of God, who hath predestinated us thereunto, will wisely order it all unto the good of his servants, Rom. viii. 29. Heb. xii. 6.

Our duty therefore it is,

1. To labour for assurance of this free love. It will assist us in all duties : it will arm us against all temptations : it will answer all objections that can be made against the soul's peace : it will sustain us in all conditions which the saddest of times can bring us unto. " If God be for us, who can be against us ?" Though

thousands should be against us to hate us, yet none shall be against us to hurt us.

2. If God love us freely, we should love him thankfully, 1 John iv. 19. and let love be the salt to season all our sacrifices. For as no benefit is saving unto us which doth not proceed from love in him, so no duty is pleasing unto him which doth not proceed from love in us, 1 John v. 3.

3. Plead this free love and grace in prayer ; when we beg pardon, nothing is too great for love to forgive : when we beg grace and holiness, nothing is too good for love to grant. There is not any one thing which faith can manage unto more spiritual advantages, than the free grace and love of God in Christ.

4. Yet we must so magnify the love of God, as that we turn not free grace into wantonness. There is a corrupt generation of men, who under pretence of exalting grace, do put disgrace upon the law of God, by taking away the mandatory power thereof from those that are under grace, a doctrine most extremely contrary to the nature of this love. For God's love to us, works love in us to him : and our love to him is this, that we keep his commandments ; and to keep a commandment is to confirm and to subject my conscience with willingness and delight unto the rule and perceptive power of that commandment. Take away the obligation of the law upon conscience as a rule of life, and you take away from our love to God the very matter about which the obedience thereof should be conversant. It is no diminution to love that a man is bound to obedience, (nay it cannot be called obedience if I be not bound unto it,) but herein the excellency of our love to God is commended, that whereas other men are so bound by the law that they fret at it, and swell against, and would be glad to be exempted from it, they who love

God, and know his love to them, delight to be thus bound, and find infinitely more sweetness in the strict rule of God's holy law, than any wicked man can do in that presumptuous liberty, wherein he allows himself to shake off and break the cords of it.

Now lastly, when we return with sound repentance unto God, then God is pleased to give more than ordinary tastes of the sweetness of his love, by removing judgments, which are the fruits of his anger, from us. This point falls in with what was handled before on the second verse. Therefore I shall conclude with these two notes :

(1.) That in all judgments God will have us look on them as fruits of his anger, and take more notice in them of his displeasure than our own sufferings. When wrath is gone out, the sword drawn, thousands and ten thousands slain in our coasts ; Israel given to the spoil, and Jacob unto robbers ; a land set on fire with civil flames, and none able to quench them ; a kingdom divided within itself ; a church which was sometimes the asylum for other exiled and afflicted christians to fly for shelter unto, miserably torn by the foolish and unnatural divisions of brethren, and dangerously threatened by the policy and power of the common enemy, who studies how to improve these divisions, to the ruin of those that torment them ; our work is to make this conclusion, " Our God is angry ;" a God that loves freely, who is infinite in mercy and pity, who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men ; this should be our greatest affliction ; and the removal of this anger by a universal reformation and conversion unto him our greatest business. And I do verily believe that England must never think of out-living or breaking through this anger of God, this critical judgment that

is upon it, so as to return to that cold and formal complexion, that Laodicean temper that she was in before, till she have so publicly and generally repented of all those civil disorders which removed the bounds and brought dissipation upon public justice: and of all those ecclesiastical disorders which let in corruptions in doctrine, superstitions in worship, abuses in government, discountenancing of the power of godliness in the most zealous professors of it, as that our reformation may be as conspicuous as our disorders have been, and it may appear to all the world that God hath washed away the filth, and purged the blood of England from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

(2.) That God's love is the true ground of removing judgments in mercy from a people. Let all human counsels be ever so deep, and armies ever so active, and cares ever so vigilant, and instruments ever so unanimous, if God's love come not in, nothing of all these can do a nation any good at all. Those that are most interested in God's love, shall certainly be most secured against his judgments. Hither our eyes, our prayers, our thoughts must be directed. Lord love us, delight in us, choose us for thyself; and then, though counsels, and treasures, and armies, and men, and horses, and all second causes fail us, though Satan rage, and hell threaten, and the foundations of the earth be shaken; though neither the vine, nor the olive, nor the fig-tree, nor the field, nor the pastures, nor the herds, nor the stall yield any supplies, yet we will rejoice in the Lord; and glory in the God of our salvation; sin shall be healed, anger shall be removed; nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON V.

I WILL BE AS THE DEW UNTO ISRAEL : HE SHALL GROW AS THE LILY, AND CAST FORTH HIS ROOTS AS LEBANON. HIS BRANCHES SHALL SPREAD, AND HIS BEAUTY SHALL BE AS THE OLIVE TREE, AND HIS SMELL AS LEBANON. THEY THAT DWELL UNDER HIS SHADOW SHALL RETURN ; THEY SHALL REVIVE AS THE CORN, AND GROW AS THE VINE : THE SCENT THEREOF SHALL BE AS THE WINE OF LEBANON,—HOSKA XIV. 5—7.

IN these verses is contained God's answer unto the second part of Israel's petition; wherein they desired him to do them good, or to receive them graciously ; and here God promiseth them several singular blessings, set forth by several metaphors and similitudes, all answering to the name of Ephraim, and the ancient promises made unto him, Deut. xxxiii. 13—17. opposite to the many contrary courses threatened in the former parts of the prophecy under metaphors of a contrary import. Here is the dew of grace, contrary to the morning cloud and the early dew that passeth away, Hos. xiii. 3. lilies, olives, vines, spices, contrary to judgments of nettles, thorns, thistles, chap. ix. 6. x. 8. spreading roots, contrary unto dry roots, chap. ix. 16. a fruitful vine bringing forth excellent wine, contrary to an empty vine bringing fruit only to itself, that is, so sour and unsavoury, as is not worth the gathering, chap. x. 1. corn growing, instead of corn taken quite away, chap. ii. 9. instead of no stalk, no bud, no meal, chap. viii. 7. fruit promised

instead of no fruit threatened, chap. ix. 16. wine promised in opposition to the failing of wine, chap. ix. 2. ii. 9. Sweet wine opposite to sour drink, chap. iv. 18. safe dwelling instead of no dwelling, chap. ix. 3. branches growing and spreading, instead of branches consumed, chap. xi. 6. green trees instead of dry springs, chap. xiii. 5. And all these fruits, the fruits as of Lebanon, which was of all other parts of that country the most fertile mountain, full of various kinds of the most excellent trees, cedars, cypress, olive, and divers others, affording rich gums and balsams; full also of all kinds of the most medicinal and aromatic herbs, sending forth a most fragrant odour, whereby all harmful and venomous creatures were driven from harbouring there: and in the valleys of that mountain were most rich grounds for pasture, corn, and vineyards, as the learned in their descriptions of the holy land have observed.

The original of all these blessings is the heavenly dew of God's grace and favour (alluding to that abundance of dew which fell on that mountain) descending upon the church, as upon a garden, bringing forth lilies; as upon a forest, strengthening the cedars; as upon a vineyard, spreading abroad the branches; as upon an oliveyard, making the trees thereof green and fruitful; and as on a rich field, receiving the corn. Here is spiritual beauty, the beauty of the lily, exceeding that of Solomon in all his glory; spiritual stability, the roots of the cedars and other goodly trees in that mountain; spiritual odours and spices of Lebanon; spiritual fruitfulness, and that of all sorts and kinds for the comfort of life. The fruit of the field, bread to strengthen; the fruit of the olive-trees, oil to refresh; the fruit of the vineyard, wine to make glad the heart of man, Psa. civ. 15.

We esteem him a very rich man, and most excellently accommodated, who hath gardens for pleasure, and fields for corn and pasture, and woods for fuel, for structure, for defence, for beauty and delight ; and vineyards for wine and oil, and all other conveniences both for the necessities and delights of a plentiful life. Thus is the church here set forth unto us as such a wealthy man, furnished with the unsearchable riches of Christ, with all kind of blessings both for sanctity and safety ; as the apostle praiseth God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, namely, election to eternal life, adoption to the condition of sons, and to a glorious inheritance, redemption from misery unto blessedness, remission of sins, knowledge of his will, holiness, and unblamableness of life, and the seal of the Holy Spirit of promise, as we find them particularly enumerated, Eph. i. 3. 13.

The words thus opened, do first afford us one general observation, in that God singlenth out so many excellent good things by name in relation to that general petition, "Do us good." That God many times answereth prayer abundantly beyond the petitions of his people. They prayed at large only for good, leaving it (as it becometh us who know not always what is good for ourselves) to his holy will and wisdom in what manner and measure to do good unto them. And he answers them in particular with all kind of good things : as in the former petition they prayed in general for the forgiveness of sin, and God in particular promiseth the healing of their rebellions, which was the greatest of their sins. God many times answers the prayers of his people, as he did the seed of Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 12. with a hundredfold increase. As God's word never returns empty unto him, so the

prayers of his servants never return empty unto them ; and usually the crop of prayer is greater than the seed out of which it grew, as the putting in of a little water into a pump makes way to the drawing out of a great deal more. Isaac and Rebecca had lived twenty years together without any children, and he grew now in years, for he was forty years old before he married ; hereupon he solemnly prays to God in behalf of his wife, because she was barren, and God gave him more than it is probable he expected, for he gave him two sons at a birth, Gen. xxv. 21, 22. As the cloud which riseth out of the earth many times in thin and insensible vapours, falleth down in great and abundant showers ; so our prayers which ascend weak and narrow, return with a full and enlarged answer. God deals in this point with his children, as Joseph did with his brethren in Egypt ; he did not only put corn into their sacks, but returned the money which they had brought to purchase it, Gen. xlii. 25. So he dealt with Solomon, he did not only give him wisdom and gifts of government, which he asked, but further gave him both riches and honour, which he asked not, 1 Kings iii. 13. The people of Israel when they were distressed by the Ammonites, besought the Lord for help ; he turns back their prayers, and sends them to their idols to help them ; they humble themselves, and put away their idols, and pray again, and the highest pitch that their petitions mounted unto, was, " Lord, we have sinned, do unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, only deliver us, we pray thee, this day," Judg. x. 15. and God did answer this prayer beyond the contents of it ; he did not only deliver them from the enemy, and so save them, but subdued the enemy under them, and delivered him into their hands ; he did not only give them the relief they desired, but a

glorious victory beyond their desires, Judg. xi. 22. God deals with his servants, as the prophet did with the woman of Shunem, when he bid her ask what she needed, and tell him what she would have him to do for the kindness she had shown to him, and she found not any thing to request at his hands; he sends for her again, and makes her a free promise of that which she most wanted and desired, and tells her that God would give her a son, 2 Kings iv. 16. So many times God is pleased to give his servants such things as they forget to ask, or gives them the things which they ask, in a fuller measure than their own desires durst propose to them. David in his troubles asked life of God, and would have esteemed it a great mercy only to have been delivered from the fear of his enemies; and God doth not only answer him according to the desire of his heart in that particular, and above it too, for he gave him length of days for ever and ever, but further settled the crown upon his head, and added honour and majesty unto his life, Psa. xxi. 2—5.

And the reasons hereof are principally two.

1. We beg of God according to the sense and knowledge which we have of our own wants, and according to the measure of that love which we bear unto ourselves. The greater our love is to ourselves, the more active and importunate will our petitions be for such good things as we need: but God answers prayers according to his knowledge of us, and according to the love which he beareth unto us. Now God knows what things we want much better than we do ourselves, and he loves our souls much better than we love them ourselves, and therefore he gives us more and better things than our own prayers know how to ask of him. A little child will beg none but trifles and mean things of his father, because he hath not

understanding to look higher, or to value things that are more excellent; but his father knowing better what is good for him, bestows on him education, trains him unto learning and virtue, that he may be fit to manage and enjoy that inheritance which he provides for him: so, "We know not what to ask as we ought," Rom. viii. 26. and when we do know, our spirits are much straitened, we have but a finite and narrow love unto ourselves. But God's knowledge is infinite, and his love is infinite, and according unto these are the distributions of his mercy. Even the apostle himself when he was in affliction and buffeted by the messenger of Satan, and vexed with a thorn in the flesh, besought the Lord for nothing but that it might depart from him; but God had a far better answer in store to the apostle's prayer, and purposed to do more for him than he desired, namely, to give him a sufficiency of grace to support him, and to magnify his strength in the infirmity of his servant, 2 Cor. xii. 9. When the prophet had encouraged men to seek the Lord, and to turn unto him, and that upon this assurance, that he will not only hear petitions for mercy and forgiveness, but will multiply to pardon, that is, will pardon more sins than we can confess, (for with him there is not only mercy, but plenteous redemption, Psa. cxxx. 7.) he further strengtheneth our faith and encourageth our obedience unto this duty, by the consideration of the thoughts of God, to wit, his thoughts of love, mercy, and peace towards us; "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isa. lv. 7—9. He can pardon beyond our petitions, because his thoughts of mercy towards us

are beyond our apprehensions. See the like place, Jer. xxix. 10—12.

2. God answers prayers not always with respect to the narrow compass of our weak desires, but with respect to his own honour, and to the declaration of his own greatness; for he promiseth to hear us that we may glorify him, Psa. l. 15. Therefore he is pleased to exceed our petitions, and to do for us abundantly above what we ask or think, that our hearts may be more abundantly enlarged, and our mouths wide open in rendering honour unto him. When Perillus, a favourite of Alexander, begged of him a portion for his daughter, the king appointed that fifty talents should be given unto him, and he answered that ten would be sufficient; the king replied that ten were enough for Perillus to ask, but not enough for Alexander to grant: so God is pleased many times to give more than we ask, that we may look upon it not only as an act of mercy, but as an act of honour; and to teach us in all our prayers to move God as well by his glory as by his mercy: so Moses did, when he prayed for pardon unto Israel, lest God's name should be blasphemed, Num. xiv. 15—17. So Joshua did when Israel turned their backs before their enemies, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" Josh. vii. 9. So Solomon in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple, "Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for, that all the people of the earth may know thy name," 1 Kings viii. 49. So David in his, for Israel, and for the performance of God's promise to the seed of David, "Do as thou hast said, let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever," 1 Chron. xvii. 23, 24. So Asa, "O Lord thou art our God, let not

man prevail against thee," 2 Chron. xiv. 11. So Jehoshaphat, "Art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?" &c. 2 Chron. xx. 6. So Hezekiah, when he spread the blasphemies of Sennacherib before the Lord, "O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only," Isa. xxxvii. 20. So the church of God in the time of distress, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name, and deliver and purge away our sins for thy name's sake; wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?" Psal. lxxix. 9, 10. As every creature of God was made for his glory, Prov. xvi. 4. Rom. xi. 36. so every attribute of God doth work and put forth itself for his glory. If he show mercy, it is to show the riches of his glory, Rom. ix. 23. Eph. i. 11, 12. If he execute justice, it is to make his power known, Rom. ix. 17. 22. 2 Thess. i. 9. When he putteth forth his power, and doeth terrible things, it is to make his name known, Isa. lxiv. 1—3. If he engage his truth, and make his promises yea and amen, it is for his own glory, and that his name may be magnified in doing what he hath said, 2 Cor. i. 20. 2 Sam. vii. 25, 26. Exod. iii. 14, 15. xii. 41. Josh. xxi. 45. Whensoever, therefore, we pray unto God, and in our prayers implore his mercy on us, his justice on his enemies, his truth to be fulfilled, his power, wisdom, or any other attribute to be manifested towards his people, the highest and most prevailing medium we can use, is the glory of his own name. God's ultimate end in working must needs be our strongest argument in praying, because therein it appears that we seek his interest in our petitions, as well, and above our own.

This serveth to encourage us unto prayer, because God doth not only hear and answer prayers, which is a sufficient motive unto his servants to call upon him, "O thou that hearest prayers, unto thee shall all flesh come," Psa. lxxv. 2. lxxvi. 20. lxxxvi. 5—7. cii. 17. but also because he oftentimes exceedeth the modesty, the ignorance, the fearfulness of our requests, by giving unto us more than we ask. When poor men make requests unto us, we usually answer them as the echo doth the voice, the answer cuts off half the petition. The hypocrite mentioned by the apostle, James ii. 15, 16. when he saw a brother or sister naked or destitute of daily food, would bid him be warmed or filled, but in the mean time give him nothing that was needful, and so did rather mock than answer their requests. We shall seldom find amongst men Jael's courtesies, Judg. v. 25. giving milk to those that ask water, except it be as hers was, an entangling benefit, the better to introduce a mischief: there are not many Naamans among us, who when you beg of them one talent, will force you to take two, 2 Kings v. 23. But God's answer to our prayers is like a multiplying glass, which renders the request much greater in the answer than it was in the prayer. As when we cast a stone into the water, though it be but little in itself, yet the circles which come from it spread wider and wider till it fill the whole pond: so our petitions, though very weak as they come from us, and craving but some one or other good thing, yet finding way to the fountain of life, and unsearchable treasure or mercy which is in Christ, are usually answered with many and more spreading benefits. The trumpet exceedingly strengtheneth the voice which passeth through it; it goes in at a narrow passage, and the voice is but a silent breath as it comes from the mouth; but it goes out

wider with a doubled and multiplied vigour : so our prayers usually go up narrow to God, but they come down with enlarged answers from him again ; as the root is but of one colour, when the flower which groweth out of it is beautified with variety.

Now this should be a great encouragement unto us to call upon God with sincerity of heart, because he multiplieth to pardon, because we know not the numbers of his salvation, Psa. lxxi. 15. we cannot count the sum of his thoughts towards us, Psa. cxxxix. 17, 18. If there were any man so wealthy that it were all one with him to give pounds or pence, and who usually when asked for silver, would give gold, every indigent and necessitous person would wait upon this man's mercy. Now, it is as easy with God to give talents as farthings, as easy to over-answer prayers, as to answer them at all. It is as easy to the sun to fill a vast palace as a little closet with light ; as easy to the sea to fill a channel as a bucket with water. " He can satisfy with goodness, and answer with wonderful and terrible things," Psa. lxxv. 4, 5. O who would not make requests unto such a God, whose usual answer unto prayer is, " Be it unto thee as thou wilt ?" Matt. xv. 28. Nay, who answers us beyond our wills and thoughts, Eph. iii. 20. and measureth forth mercy by the greatness of his own grace, and not the narrowness of our desires. The shekel belonging to the sanctuary was, as many learned men think, in weight double to the common shekel which was used in civil matters ; to note unto us, that as God expects from us double the care in things belonging unto him above what we use in the things of the world, so he usually measureth back double unto us again ; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over into our bosoms. When the man sick of the palsy was

carried unto Christ to be healed, Christ did beyond the expectation of those that brought him, for he not only cured him of his disease, but of his sin, gave him not only health of body, but peace of conscience; first, "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;" and then, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thy house," Matt. ix. 2. 6. The thief on the cross besought Christ to remember him when he came into his kingdom, but Christ answers him far beyond his petition, assuring him that the very same day he should be with him in paradise, Luke xliii. 42, 43. The poor man at the gate of the temple begged for nothing of Peter and John but a small alms, but they gave him an answer to his request far more worth than any other alms could be, namely, such an alms as caused him to stand in need of alms no longer, restored him in the name of Christ unto sound strength, that he "walked, and leaped, and praised God," Acts iii. 6. In like manner doth God answer the prayers of his people, not always it may be in the kind, and to the express will of him that asketh, but for the better, and consequently more to his will than himself expressed.

Also, this should encourage us in prayer to beg for an answer, not according to the defect and narrowness of our own low conceptions, but according to the fulness of God's own abundant mercies. It would not please one of us if a beggar should ask of us gold, or jewels, silk, or dainties, we should esteem such a petitioner fuller of pride and impudence than of want. But God delights to have his people beg great things of him, to implore the performance of exceeding great and precious promises, 2 Pet. i. 4. to pray for a share in the unsearchable riches of Christ, to know things which pass knowledge, and to be filled with the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 8. 16. 18. to ask "things which

eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive," 1 Cor. ii. 9. to ask not as beggars only for an alms, but as children for an inheritance, Rom. viii. 15. 17. Gal. iv. 6, 7. not to ask something or a few things, but in every thing to let our requests be made known unto God, Phil. iv. 6. because with Christ he giveth us freely all things, Rom. viii. 32. even all things richly to enjoy, 1 Tim. vi. 17. As Alexander the great was well pleased with Anaxarchus the philosopher, when he desired a hundred talents of his treasurer; he doth well, saith he, in asking it, and understands his friend aright, who hath one both able and willing to give him so great a gift; God allows his children a spiritual and heavenly ambition to covet earnestly the best gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 31. to aspire unto a kingdom, and accordingly to put up great and honourable requests unto him. To think what great things Christ hath purchased, what great things God hath promised and proposed to us, and to regulate our prayers more by the merits and riches of Christ, and by the greatness of God's mercies, than by those apprehensions which we cannot but have of our own unworthiness.

Now next from the particulars of the text, though many particular observations might be raised, yet I shall reduce them unto one general, which may comprehend the particulars; namely, that whom God loves and pardons, upon them he poureth forth the benediction of his grace and Spirit, as the dew of heaven to quicken them unto a holy and fruitful conversation. The general promises set down before, I will heal, I will love, are here further amplified by many excellent metaphors, and elegant figures, which are nine in number, multiplied into so many particulars, partly because of the difficulty of the promise to

be believed, which is therefore severally inculcated and represented : partly because of the dejectedness of the people under the variety of their former sufferings, who are therefore by variety of mercies to be raised up and revived ; and partly to represent the perfection and completeness of the blessings intended, which should be of all sorts, and to all purposes ; and the foundation of all the rest is this, that God promiseth to be as the dew unto Israel : for Ephraim having been cursed with much drought and barrenness ; now when God blesseth him again, he promiseth to be unto him as dew is to the weary and thirsty ground, which so refresheth it, that the fruits thereof do grow and flourish again. Lilies, flowers, trees, vines, corn are very apt, (especially in such hot countries as Judea,) without much refreshing dew and showers from heaven, to dry up and wither away : so would Ephraim have been quite consumed by the heavy wrath of God, if he should not with the supplies of his grace and Holy Spirit, and with his heavenly refreshments and loving countenance revive them again.

Dew, in the natural signification of it, importeth a comforting, refreshing, encouraging, and calling forth the fruits of the earth, as being of a gentle, insinuating virtue, which leisurely soaketh into the ground ; and in that sense is mentioned as a blessing, Gen. xxvii. 28. In the mystical and spiritual sense of it, it signifieth Christ, Psa. lxxii. 6. who by his holy word and heavenly grace dropping down with distilling upon the souls of men, Deut. xxxii. 2. Job xxix. 22, 23. by his princely favour and loving countenance, which is as a cloud of the latter rain, Prov. xvi. 15. xix. 12. by his heavenly righteousness and most spiritual efficacy, Isa. xxvi. 19. xlv. 8. doth so quicken, vegetate, and revive the hearts of men, that they, like

dew from the womb of the morning, are born in great abundance unto him, as multitudes of men, and believers use to be expressed in scripture by drops of dew, Psa. cx. 3. Mic. v. 7. In one word, what dew is to the fields, gardens, vineyards, flowers, fruits of the earth, after a hot and a scorching day, that the favour, word, grace, loving countenance, and Holy Spirit of Christ will be to the drooping and afflicted consciences of his people.

From this metaphor then we learn,

1. That we are naturally dry, barren, fruitless, and utterly unable to do any good, to bring forth any fruit unto God, like a heathy and parched land subject to the scorching terrors of the wrath of God, and to his burning indignation. So Christ compares Jerusalem unto a dry, withered tree fitted unto judgment, Luke xxiii. 31. And he assureth us that "out of him we can do nothing," John xv. 4, 5. In us of ourselves there dwelleth no good thing, Rom. vii. 18. we are not of ourselves as of ourselves, sufficient unto anything, 2 Cor. iii. 5. He is the sun that healeth us, Mal. iv. 2. he the rain that disposeth us, Psa. lxxii. 6. he the root that deriveth life and nourishment upon us, Rev. xxii. 16. As natural, so much more spiritual fruitfulness, hath its ultimate resolution into him, who alone is the Father of the rain, and begetteth the drops of dew, Hos. ii. 21, 22. Job xxxviii. 28.

2. That the grace of God is like dew to the barren and parched hearts of men to make them fruitful. And there are many things wherein the proportion and resemblance stands.

(1.) None can give it but God, it comes from above, it is of a celestial original, the nativity thereof is from the womb of the morning. "Are there any amongst the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause

rain? or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? for thou hast made all these things," Jer. xiv. 22. And the like we may say in a more strict and peculiar sense of regeneration, that it is a spiritual and heavenly birth; it is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. There is no concurrence or active assistance of the flesh, or of any natural abilities unto a birth which is merely spiritual, John i. 13. James i. 17, 18. Therefore Christ was pleased to go up into heaven, before he shed forth his Holy Spirit in abundance on the church, John vii. 39. xvi. 17. Acts i. 4, 5. to teach us, first, that our conversion and sanctification comes from above, by a divine teaching, by a spiritual conviction, by a supernatural and omnipotent attraction, by a heavenly calling, by the will of him who alone can give a will unto us. No voice can be heard by those that are dead, but "the voice of the Son of man," John vi. 44, 45. xvi. 8—11. Heb. iii. 1. James i. 18. Phil. ii. 13. John v. 25. Heb. xii. 25. And withal to acquaint us whither the affections and conversations of men thus sanctified should tend, namely, unto heaven, as every thing works towards its original, and every part inclines unto the whole, Col. iii. 1, 2. Phil. iii. 20. With allusion unto this metaphor of dew or rain, the Holy Spirit is said to be poured out upon the churches, Acts ii. 17. Tit. iii. 6. and the word of grace is frequently compared unto rain. As it is the seed by which we are enabled to be fruitful, Mat. xiii. 18. so it is the rain which softeneth the heart, that it may be the better wrought upon by that seminal virtue, Isa. lv. 10, 11. Heb. vi. 7. whereas false teachers are called clouds without water, Jude 12. They have no fructifying virtue in them. None can give grace but God; it is heavenly in its

nature, therefore it is so in its original; it stays not for man, Mic. v. 7. It depends not on the wills, concurrencies, preparations, or dispositions which arise out of us, but it wholly preventeth* us, we are made active by it, but we are not at all antecedently active in fitting or disposing ourselves for it.

(2.) It is the fruit of a serene, clear, and quiet heaven; for dew never falleth either in scorching or tempestuous weather, as philosophers have observed; in like manner, the grace, favour, and blessings of God are the fruits of his reconciled affection towards us. Upon the wicked he raineth storm and tempest, he showereth down on them the fury of his wrath, and shows himself dark, cloudy, gloomy, terrible unto them, Psa. xi. 6. lxxxiii. 15. Job xx. 23. Nah. i. 3. 8. But unto those that fear his name he openeth a clear and a gracious countenance, and being reconciled unto them, sheddeth abroad his love into their hearts, and his peace into their consciences, like Gideon's dew on the fleece and on the ground, as a special evidence of his grace; and, therefore, the Psalmist compares the love and peace that is amongst brethren unto dew, Psa. cxxxiii. 3. which ever falleth from a calm, serene, and quiet sky.

(3.) It is abundant and innumerable, who can number the drops of dew on the ground, or the hairs of little rain? (for so they are called in the original, because of their smallness and number, Deut. xxxii. 2.) so Hushai expresseth the multitude of all Israel, "We will light upon him as the dew falleth upon the ground," 2 Sam. xvii. 12. and the multitudes of believers are said to be born unto Christ by his sending forth the rod of his strength, "As dew from the womb of the morning," Psa. cx. 3. as we find historically verified,

* Goeth before.

Acts ii. 41. v. 14. 16. vi. 7. ix. 31. 42. xix. 20. Such is the grace and favour of God unto his people after their conversion ; unsearchable, it cannot be comprehended, or measured, nor brought under any number or account, Psal. lxxi. 15. cxxxix. 17, 18. Christ is compared unto manna, he was the bread that came down from heaven, John vi. 50, 51. and manna came in mighty abundance, so that there was enough for every one to gather, Exod. xvi. 16. It had dew under it, and dew over it, as we may conjecture by comparing Exod. xvi. 14. with Num. xi. 9. whereunto the Holy Ghost seemeth to allude when he speaks of the hidden manna, Rev. ii. 17. though that may likewise refer unto the pot of manna which was kept in the tabernacle, Exod. xvi. 32, 33. Heb. ix. 4. as our life is said to be hid with Christ now he is in heaven. Col. iii. 3. By this dew coming along with manna is intimated, that the mercies of God in Christ, his daily mercies, (which are said, with allusion, I suppose, unto this manna, to be renewed every morning, Lam. iii. 23.) and his hidden mercies, to wit, the inward comforts of his grace and Spirit, are all innumerable and past finding out. We may say of his mercies, as the psalmist of his commandments, I have found an end of all perfection, but these are exceeding broad, more than eye hath seen or ear heard, or the heart itself is able to comprehend, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

(4.) It is silent, slow, insensible ; while it is falling you cannot say here it is : it deceives the eye, and is too subtle for that to see it : it deceives the ear, and is too silent for that to hear it : it deceives the face, and is too thin and spiritual for that to feel it. You see it when it is come, but you cannot observe how it comes. In this manner was God pleased to fill the world with the knowledge of his gospel, and with the

grace of his Spirit, by quiet, small, and, as it were, by insensible means : "The kingdom of God came not with observation," Luke xvii. 20, 21. that is, with any visible, notable splendour, or external pomp, (as the Jews expected the Messiah to come,) but it came with spiritual efficacy, and with internal power upon the consciences of men, and spread itself over the world by the ministry of a very few despised instruments ; with respect unto which manner of working the Spirit is compared unto wind, which we hear and feel, but "know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes," John iii. 8. The operations of grace are secret and silent upon the conscience ; you shall find mighty changes wrought, and shall not tell how they were wrought. The same man coming into the church, one hour a sow, a dog, a lion, and going out the next hour in all visible respects the same, but invisibly changed into a lamb.

(5.) It is of a soft and benign nature, which gently insinuateth and worketh itself in the ground, and by degrees moisteneth and mollifieth it, that it may be fitted unto the seed which is cast into it. In like manner, the Spirit, the grace, the word of God is of a searching, insinuating, softening, quality ; it sinks into the heart, and works itself into the conscience, and from thence makes way for itself into the whole man, mind, thoughts, affections, words, actions, fitting them all unto the holy seed that is put into them ; as the earth being softened and mingled with the dew is the more easily drawn up into those varieties of herbs and fruits that are fed by it.

(6.) It is of a vegetating and quickening nature, it causeth things to grow and revive again ; therefore the prophet calls it the dew of herbs, Isa. xxvi. 19. which are thereby refreshed, and recover life and

beauty ; even so the word and spirit of grace distilling upon the soul, as small rain upon tender herbs, and as showers on the grass, cause it to live the life of God, and to bring forth the fruits of holiness and obedience, Isa. lv. 10, 11. Those parts of the world which are under either perpetual frosts or perpetual scorplings are barren and fruitless, the earth being thus closed up, and the sap thereof dried away. Such is the condition of a soul under wrath, which hath no apprehensions of God but in frost or fire ; for “ who can stand before his cold ? ” Psa. cxlvii. 17. “ who can dwell with everlasting burnings ? ” Isa. xxxiii. 14. Fear contracteth and bindeth up the powers of the soul ; it is the greatest indisposer of all other unto regular action. But when the soul can apprehend God as love, find healing in his wings, and reviving in his ordinances, this love is of an opening and expansive quality, calling forth the heart unto duty, love within as it were hastening to meet and close with love without ; the love of obedience in us, with the love of favour and grace in God. I shut and bar my door against an enemy whom I fear and look upon as armed to hurt me ; but I open wide my doors, my bosom, unto a friend whom I love, and look upon as furnished with counsel, and comfort and benefits to revive me. There is a kind of mutual love between dew and the earth ; dew loves the earth with a love of beneficence, doing it good, and earth loves the dew with a love of concupiscence, earnestly desiring it, and opening unto it. Such is the love between Christ and the soul when he appears as dew unto it. He visits the soul with a love of mercy, reviving it, and the soul puts forth itself towards him in a love of duty, earnestly coveting as well to serve as to enjoy him.

(7.) It is of a refreshing and comforting nature, :

tempering the heat of those hotter countries, and so causing the face of things to flourish with beauty and delight. So God promiseth to be unto his people in their troubles, "as a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest," Isa. xviii. 4. The spiritual joy and heavenly comfort which the peace and grace of God ministers to the consciences of believers, Rom. xv. 13. v. 1. Phil. iv. 4. 1 Pet. i. 8. is said to make the bones flourish like a herb, Isa. lxvi. 14. as on the other side a broken spirit is said to dry up the bones, Prov. xvii. 22. "Their soul," saith the prophet, "shall be as a watered garden, they shall sorrow no more; I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them," Jer. xxxi. 12, 13.

By all which we should learn, to be sensible of our own personal and spiritual dryness, barrenness, emptiness of fruit and peace, hard hearts, with red consciences, guilty spirits, under our own particular sins; so in regard of the whole land to take notice of that tempest of wrath, which like an east wind out of the wilderness, "drieth up our springs, and spoileth our treasures," as the prophet complains, Hos. xiii. 15, 16. and to be humbled into penitent resolutions, as the church here is. If God who was wont to be as dev. to our nation, who made it heretofore like a paradise, and a watered garden, be now as a tempest, as a consuming fire unto it, turning things upside down, burning the inhabitants of the earth, causing "our land to mourn, and our joy to wither," as the prophet speaks, Joel i. 12. this is an evident sign that the "earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof," Isa. xxiv. 4, 5. Therefore as our sins have turned our dew into blood, so our repentance must turn our blood into dew again. If ever we look to have a happy peace, we must make it with God. Men can give peace only to our bodies,

our fields, our houses, our purses, (nor that either without his over-ruling power and providence, who alone manageth all the counsels and resolutions of men,) but he alone can give peace to our consciences by the assurance of his love which is better than life. And if there should be peace in a nation, made up only by human prudence and correspondences, without public repentance, and thorough reformation in church, in state, in families, in persons, in judgment, in manners ; it would be but like those short interims between the Egyptian plagues, *Exod. viii. 15. ix. 34.* a respiting only, not a removing of our affliction ; like the shining of the sun on Sodom before the fire and brimstone fell upon it, *Gen. xix. 23, 24.* We all cry and call for peace, and while anything is left would gladly pay dear, very dear to recover it again. But there is no sure and lasting purchase of it, but by unfeigned repentance and turning unto God ; this is able to give peace in the midst of war. In the midst of storm and tempest, Christ is sufficient security to the tossed ship, *Matt. viii. 24. 27.* "This man is the peace even when the Assyrian is in the land," *Mic. v. 5.* Whereas impenitency, even when we have recovered an outward peace, leaves us still in the midst of most potent enemies ; God, Christ, angels, scripture, creatures, conscience, sins, curses, all our enemies. The apostle tells us that "lusts war against the soul," *1 Pet. ii. 11.* There is a strong emphasis in the word soul, which is more worth than all the world, nothing to be taken in exchange for it, *Matt. xvi. 26.* So long as we have our lusts unconquered, we are under the most woful war in the world, which doth not spoil us of our blood, our money, our coin, our cattle, our houses, our children, but of the salvation of our immortal souls. Time will repair the ruins of other wars, but

eternity itself will not deliver that poor soul which is lost, and fallen in the wars of lust.

Therefore if you would have peace as a mercy, get it from God, let it be a dew from heaven upon your conversion unto him. A king's favour is said to be as dew on the grass, Prov. xix. 12. and as a cloud of the latter rain, Prov. xvi. 15. and it would with all joyfulness be so apprehended, if by that means the blessings of peace were bestowed upon these distressed kingdoms. How much more comfortable would it be to have it as a gift from God unto a repenting nation. For God can give peace in anger, as well as he doth war. A ship at sea may be distressed by a calm, as well as broken by a tempest. The cattle which we mean to kill, we do first prefer unto some fat pasture : and sometimes God gives over punishing, not in mercy but in fury ; leaving men to go on quietly in their own hearts' lusts, that they who are filthy may be filthy still, Psa. lxxxi. 12. Hos. iv. 14. 17. Isa. i. 5. Ezek. xxiv. 13. God was exceeding angry with Israel when he gave them their hearts' desire, and sent them quails, Num. xi. 32, 33. Many men get their wills from God's anger by murmuring, as others do theirs from his mercy by prayer ; but then there comes a curse along with it. Now, therefore, when our own sword doth devour us, when our land is through the wrath of the Lord of hosts so darkened, that the people thereof are as fuel of the fire, no man sparing his brother, every man eating the flesh of his own arm. It is the sad character which the prophet gives of a civil war, Isa. ix. 19, 20. Let us take heed of God's complaint, " In vain have I smitten your children, they receive no correction, Jer. ii. 30. Let us make it our business to recover God. It is he that causeth wars to cease in the earth, Psa. xlv. 9. And

it is he who poureth out upon men the strength of battle, and giveth them over to the spoilers, Isa. xlii. 24, 25. A sinful nation gains nothing by any human treaties, policies, counsels, contributions, till by repentance they secure their interest in God, and make him on their side. God being prevailed with by Moses in behalf of Israel after the horrible provocation of the golden calf, sends a message to them, "I will send an angel before thee, and will drive out the Canaanite." And presently it follows, "When the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned," Exod. xxxiii. 2—4. What! were these evil tidings, to have an angel to protect and lead them! to have their enemies vanquished! to have possession of a land flowing with milk and honey! was there any thing lamentable in all this? Yes, to have all this and much more, and not to have God and his presence, was heavy tidings unto God's people. And therefore Moses never gave God over till he promised them his own presence again, with which he chose rather to stay in a wilderness, than without it to go into the land of Canaan; "If thy presence go not along, carry us not up hence," Exod. xxxiii. 13—15.

We should also from hence learn, whatever our spiritual wants are, to look up to heaven for a supply of them. Neither gardens, nor woods, nor vineyards, nor fields, nor flowers, nor trees, nor corn, nor spices will flourish or revive without the dew and concurrence of heavenly grace, Christ alone is all in all unto his church; though the instruments be earthly, yet the virtue which gives success unto them comes from heaven.

[1.] The beauty of the lilies, or, as the prophet David calls it, the beauty of holiness, ariseth from the dew of the morning, Psa. cx. 3. He is the ornament,

the attire, the comeliness of his spouse. For his people to forget him, is for a maid to forget her ornaments, or a spouse her attire, Jer. ii. 32. The perfect beauty of the church, is that comeliness of his which he communicates unto her, Ezek. xvi. 14. Of ourselves we are wretched, miserable, poor, naked; our gold, our riches, our white raiment, we must buy of him, Rev. iii. 18. He is the Lord our righteousness, whom therefore we are said to put on, Rom. xiii. 14. He hath made us kings and priests unto our God, Rev. v. 10. and being such, he hath provided beautiful robes for us, as once he appointed for the priests, Exod. xxviii. 2. Rev. iv. 4. vi. 11. vii. 9. This spiritual beauty of holiness in Christ's church, is sometimes compared to the marriage ornaments for a queen, Psa. xlv. 14. Rev. xviii. 7, 8. xxi. 2. sometimes to the choice flowers of a garden, roses and lilies, Cant. ii. 1, 2. sometimes to a most glorious and goodly structure, Rev. xxi. 11. 23. sometimes to the shining forth of the moon, and the brightness of the sun, Cant. vi. 10. Rev. xii. 1. All the united excellences of the creatures are too low to adumbrate and figure the glories of the church.

[2.] The root and stability of the church is in and from him; he is the root of David, Rev. v. 5. Except he dwell in us, we cannot be rooted nor grounded Eph. iii. 17. All our strength and sufficiency is from him, Phil. iv. 13. Eph. vi. 10. 1 Pet. v. 10. The graft is supported by another root, and not by its own. This is the reason of the stability of the church, because it is founded upon a rock, Matt. xvi. 18. not upon Peter, but upon him whom Peter confessed; upon the apostles only doctrinally, but upon Christ personally, as the chief corner-stone, elect and precious, in whom whosoever believeth shall not be

confounded, or by failing in his confidence be any ways disappointed and put to shame, Eph. ii. 20, 21. 1 Pet. ii. 6. This is the difference between the righteousness of creation, and the righteousness of redemption; the state of the world in Adam, and the state of the church in Christ. Adam had his righteousness in his own keeping, and therefore when the power of hell set upon him, he fell from his stedfastness; there was no promise given unto him that the gates of hell should not prevail against him; being of an earthly constitution, he had corruptibility, mutability, infirmity belonging unto him out of the principles of his being. But Christ the second Adam is the Lord from heaven; over whom death hath no claim nor power; and the righteousness and stability of the church is founded, and hath its original in him. The powers of darkness must be able to evacuate the virtue of his sacrifice, to stop God's ears unto his intercession, to repel and keep back the supply and influences of his Spirit, to keep or recover possession against his ejection, in one word, to kill him again, and to thrust him away from the right hand of the Majesty on High, before ever they can blow down or overturn his church. As Plato compared a man, so may we the church unto a tree inverted, with the root above and the branches below. And the root of the tree doth not only serve to give life to the branches while they abide in it, but to hold them fast that none can be able to cut them off, John x. 28, 29.

[3.] The growth and spreading abroad the branches of the church, is from him whose name is the Branch, Isa. xi. 11. Zech. iii. 8. Unto him are all the ends of the earth given for a possession, and all the kingdoms of the world are to be the Lord's and his Christ's. In regard of his dispensation towards Israel, God's

first-born, so the land of Canaan is peculiarly called Immanuel's land, Isa. viii. 8. But in regard of his latter dispensation, when he sent the rod of his strength out of Sion, and went forth conquering and to conquer, and gave commission to preach the gospel unto every creature; so the whole world is now under the gospel become Immanuel's land, and he is king of all the earth, Psal. xlvii. 7. "King of kings and Lord of lords," Rev. xix. 16. Gentiles come into the light of his church, and kings to the brightness of her rising, and "the nation and kingdom that will not serve her shall perish," &c. Isa. lx. 3. 12. Now every country is Canaan, and every christian church the Israel of God, and every regenerate person born in Sion, and every spiritual worshipper the circumcision; now Christ is crucified in Galatia, and a passover eaten in Corinth, and manna fed on in Pergamus, and an altar set up in Egypt, and Gentiles sacrificed, and stones made children unto Abraham, and temples unto God; see John iv. 21. Mal. i. 11. Zeph. ii. 11. Gal. vi. 16. Isa. xlv. 5. Zech. viii. 23. Rom. ii. 29. Psal. lxxxvii. 4, 5. Phil. iii. 3. Col. ii. 11. Gal. iii. 1. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. Rev. ii. 17. Isa. xix. 19. 21. Rom. xv. 16. Luke iii. 8. Eph. ii. 11. In Christ's former dispensation, the church was only national amongst the Jews, but in his latter dispensation it is oecumenical (general) and universal over all the world; a spreading tree, under the shadow of the branches whereof shall dwell the fowl of every wing, Ezek. xvii. 23.

[4.] The graces of the Holy Spirit wherewith the church is anointed are from him. He is the olive-tree which emptieth the golden oil out of himself, Zech. iv. 12. "Of his fulness we all receive grace for grace," John i. 16. with the same Spirit are we

anointed, animated by the same life, regenerated to the same nature, renewed unto the same image, reserved unto the same inheritance, dignified in some respect with the same offices, made priests to offer spiritual sacrifices, and kings to subdue spiritual enemies, and prophets to receive teaching from God, and to have a duplicate of his law written in our hearts, 2 Cor. i. 21. John xiv. 19. 1 Cor. xv. 48, 49. Rom. viii. 17. 1 Pet. i. 5. Rev. i. 6. John vi. 45. Jer. xxxi. 33.

[5.] The sweet perfume and scent or smell of Lebanon, which ariseth out of holy duties, the grace which droppeth from the lips of the people, the spiritual incense which ariseth out of their prayers, the sweet savour of the gospel which spreadeth itself abroad in the ministry of his word, and in the lives of his servants, they have all their original in him, and from his heavenly dew. Of ourselves, without him, as we are, altogether vile and unclean, Psa. xiv. 1. Prov. xiii. 5. so we defile every holy thing which we meddle with, Hag. ii. 13, 14. Prov. xxviii. 9. Isa. i. 11. 15. insomuch that God says, I will not smell in your solemn assemblies, Amos v. 21. they are all of them as they came from us, "Gall and wormwood, and bitter clusters," Deut. xxix. 18. xxxii. 33. But when the Spirit of Christ bloweth upon us, and his grace is poured into our hearts and lips, then the spices flow out, Cant. iv. 16. Then prayer goes up like incense and sweet odours, Rev. v. 8. then instead of corrupt, rotten, courageous communication, our discourses tend to edifying, and minister grace to the hearers, Eph. iv. 29. then the savour of the knowledge of Christ manifests itself in the mouths and lives of his servants in every place where they come, 2 Cor. xi. 14.

[6.] The shadow and refreshment, the refuge and

shelter of the church against storm and tempest, against rain and heat, against all trouble and persecution, is from him alone. He is the only defence and covering that is over the assemblies and glory of Sion, Isa. iv. 5. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, unto which the righteous fly and are safe, Prov. xviii. 10. So the Lord promiseth when his people should be exiles from his temple, and scattered out of their own land, that he would himself be a little sanctuary unto them in the countries where they should come, Ezek. xi. 16. He is a dwelling-place unto his church in all conditions, Psa. xc. 1. xci. 1, 2. a strength to the needy, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, a chamber wherein to retire when indignation is kindled, Isa. xxv. 4. xxvi. 20. xxxii. 2. Every history of God's power, every promise of his love, every observation and experience of his providence, every comfort in his word, the knowledge which we have of his name by faith, and the knowledge which we have of it by experience, are so many arguments to trust in him, and so many hiding places to fly unto him, against any trouble. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee," Psa. lvii. 3. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? still trust in God," Psa. xlii. 5. 11. He hath delivered, he doth deliver, he will deliver, 2 Cor. i. 10. Many times the children of God are reduced to such extremities, that they have nothing to encourage themselves withal but their interest in him; nothing to fly unto for hope but his great name made known unto them by faith in his promises, and by experience of his goodness, power, and providence. This was David's case at Ziklag, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. and Israel's at the Red Sea, Exod. xiv. 10. 13. and Jonah's in the belly of the fish, Jonah ii. 4. 7. and

Paul's in the shipwreck, Acts xxvii. 20. 25. God is never so much glorified by the faith of his servants, as when they can hold up their trust in him against sight and sense ; and when reason saith, Thou art undone, for all help fails thee, can answer in faith, I am not undone, for he said, I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee.

[7.] The power which the church hath to rise up above her pressures, to outgrow her troubles, to revive after lopping and harrowing, to make use of affliction as a means to flourish again, all this is from him. That in trouble we are not overwhelmed, but can say with the apostle, " As dying, and behold we live ; as chastened, and not killed ; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things ;" like the corn which dies and is quickened again, like the vine that is lopped and spreads again, all this is from him who is the resurrection and the life, John xi. 25. who was that grain of wheat which dying, and being cast into the ground, did bring forth much fruit, John xii. 24. the branch which grew out of the roots of Jesse, when that goodly family was sunk so low, as from David the king unto Joseph the carpenter.

[8.] As God is the author of all these blessings unto his people, so when he bestows them he doth it in perfection ; the fruits which this dew produceth, are the fruits of Lebanon, the choicest and most excellent of any other. If he plant a vineyard, it shall be in a very fruitful hill, and with the choicest plants, Isa. v. 1, 2. a noble vine, a right seed, Jer. ii. 21. When in any kind of straits we have recourse to the creature for supply, either we find it like our Saviour's fig-tree, without fruit, or like our prophet's vine, as good as empty, the fruits thereof not worth the gathering,

Hos. x. 1. Grapes of gall and bitter clusters ; full of vanity, windiness, vexation, disappointment ; friends fail either in their love, or in their power, people cry Hosanna to day, and Crucify him to morrow. Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree a lie. Counsels clash, or are puzzled with intricacies, and unhappy obstacles, like the wheels in Ezekiel's vision, that seem hampered in one another. Armies like Reuben, unstable as waters, that flow now, and anon ebb, and sink away again. Treasures, like the mountains out of which they were first digged, barren, and fruitless, better fuel to feed our sins, than water to quench our flames ; matter of prey to the wicked, more than of help to the miserable. In one word, take any creature-helps in the world, and there will be something, nay very much of defect in them. All being, but God's, is mixed with not being ; and as every man, so every creature else which is nothing but creature, is a liar, like Job's brook, or friends which he compareth thereunto, that vanisheth into nothing when there is most need of it, Job vi. 17. 21. A liar, either by way of perfidiousness, which promiseth and then deceives, or by way of impotency, which undertaketh and then miscarries. But whenever God promiseth and undertaketh to bless any man or any people, he carrieth on his work to perfection ; his blessings are all milk and honey, dew and fatness, wine and oil, the fruits of Lebanon, full of sweetness and maturity : he perfects that which he begins concerning his servants, Psa. cxxxviii. 8. Phil. i. 6. There doth not one thing fail of all the good he speaks concerning his people, they all come to pass, and not one faileth, Josh. xxiii. 14. The riches which are gotten by human lusts and sinful resolutions, do come along with many and piercing sorrows, 1 Tim. vi. 10

but when God blesseth a man with riches, he takes away all the sorrow from it, Prov. x. 22. The gifts of God are all of them like his works, very good, Gen. i. 31. and bring after a sabbath, a rest, and peace into the soul with them.

Further, we should from hence learn to show forth the fruits of this heavenly dew in those several expressions which the prophet here useth, drawn from the consideration of a garden, forest, fruitful field, heavenly paradise, which is a similitude frequently used by the Holy Spirit, to note the beauty, sweetness, fruit, comfort, shelter, protection, which the church of Christ affordeth to the members of it, Isa. xxxv. 1, 2. lviii. 11. Cant. iv. 12. 16. vi. 2. as on the other side the wicked are compared unto a dry desert, and barren wilderness, Isa. xxxv. 6, 7. xli. 18. Jer. xvii. 8. For these things as they are promises in regard of God, and so matter of comfort, so are they duties in regard of us, and so matter of obedience.

[1.] He promiseth, that his people shall grow as the lily, which is the most beautiful of all flowers, Matt. vi. 28, 29. That they shall be gloriously clothed like a king's daughter, with the garments of praise, and the Spirit of holiness, Isa. lxii. 3. set forth by various metaphors of brodered work, and fine linen, and silk, and ornaments, and bracelets, and chains, and jewels, and crowns, Ezek. xvi. 10—13.

And as it is his promise, so it ought to be our duty and endeavour to adorn the gospel of Christ, to be in his garden as a lily, and not as a nettle or bramble; to walk as becometh godliness; to let our light shine before men, that they may be won to admire the amiableness of the Lord's tabernacle, and glorify God in the hour of their visitation, to be as lights in the midst of a crooked generation, Phil. ii. 15. or as lilies

amongst briers, Cant. ii. 2. to make it appear that spiritual wisdom causeth the face to shine, Ecc. viii. 1. That holiness is indeed a most beautiful thing, which commendeth us to the eyes of God and angels; a robe worn by Christ the King of saints, and by which we are made like unto him who is the fairest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely; we should take heed of anything whereby our holy profession may be blemished, and the name of God defiled by our means: of such levity as is inconsistent with the majesty of holiness; of such moroseness as is inconsistent with the meekness of holiness; of such drooping as is inconsistent with the joy of holiness; of such stiffness and sourness as is inconsistent with the lenity of holiness. In one word, we should labour by the innocency, purity, elegancy, fragrancy, fruitfulness; by the winning ingenuousness, the mild and humble condescension, the prudent insinuation, the meek, quiet, and graceful managing of a holy life, to show forth the praises of him that hath called us, and to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, who, like blackamoors, despise beauty, as dogs bark at the shining of the moon, and speak evil of the things they know not.

[2.] He promiseth that his church should cast out his roots as Lebanon: though she should have the beauty of the lily, yet she should be freed from the infirmity of it, an aptness to fade and wither, beautiful to-day, and to-morrow cast into the oven. But she should have stability like the cedar, which is one of the strongest of trees, and least subject to putrefaction, and therefore the church is compared to it, Ezek. xvii. 22, 23. and the temple is said to be built of it, 1 Kings vi. 15, 16. To signify the strength and duration of the church, against which the gates of hell

should not prevail. And we may by the way observe, that most of the things here mentioned by our prophet, are also noted to have been in the temple, or in the services thereof; lilies, 1 Kings vii. 19. 22. 26. olive trees, 1 Kings vi. 23. 32, 33. spices for incense, wheat and oil for meat offerings, wine for drink offerings. God furnisheth his people with those blessings which may be most properly dedicated unto him. Teaching us as often as we receive any gifts from God, presently to inquire what relation they have to his temple, how his name may be honoured, how his church may be served, how his gospel may be furthered, how his people may be edified and comforted by them, how all our enjoyments may be divided as spoils unto Christ. The power of great men, Isa. lx. 3. the swords of mighty men, 1 Sam. xviii. 17. xxv. 28. Judg. vii. 8. the wisdom of learned men, 1 Kings iii. 9. 28. the cunning of craftsmen, Exod. xxviii. 3. xxxi. 6. the wealth of rich men, Isa. xxiii. 18. Prov. iii. 9. Psal. xlv. 12. Isa. lx. 6. 9. 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. Abraham gave of the spoils to Melchisedec, Heb. vii. 4. and Israel of all their wealth to the tabernacle, Exod. xxxv. 21. and David and his people of their treasure to the temple, 1 Chron. xxix. 2.

And as it is his promise, that the church should thus take root, 2 Kings xix. 30. Jer. xvii. 8. so we should account it our duty to be firm, stable, constant, unmovable in the truth, and in the work of the Lord, as a house built upon a rock. To stand fast and be rooted in the truth, that we may hold the profession thereof without wavering, not being carried about with every wind of doctrine; but knowing whom and what we have believed, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. Eph. iv. 14. Col. ii. 7. Heb. x. 23. to stand fast and be rooted in the love of God, that we may be strengthened with might in his

service, and may with purpose of heart cleave unto him, being established by his grace, Eph. iii. 17. Col. i. 11. Heb. xii. 28. xiii. 9. In the civil law, till a tree hath taken root, it doth not belong to the soil on which it is planted. It is not enough to be in the church, except, like the cedar of Lebanon, we cast forth our roots, and are so planted that we flourish in the courts of our God, and bring forth fruit in our old age, Psa. xcii. 12—14.

[3.] He promised that the church should spread forth her branches, and fill the earth, and grow into a great compass and extent, and should send forth her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river, Psa. lxxx. 9—11. Dan. ii. 35. That his church should be a universal church over the whole world; that as the whole world in regard of sin lieth in mischief, 1 John v. 19. so the whole world should have Christ for its propitiation, through faith, 1 John ii. 2. By one Spirit we all are baptized into one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13. and that one body made up of all the churches of the saints, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. even of all nations, kindreds, people, tongues, Rev. vii. 9. no difference of persons, "Neither Greek nor Jew, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ all, and in all," Col. iii. 11. no difference of places: all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, both theirs and ours, 1 Cor. i. 2. no difference of times, "Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever," Heb. xiii. 8.

And as this is the promise, so we should endeavour, 1. To grow ourselves in knowledge and grace; to let our profiting appear unto all men; to abound in the work of the Lord; to let our graces from the heart, like leaven from the middle of the lump, spread abroad, and find their way to all the parts and powers of soul

and body, that the whole man may be “filled with the fulness of God,” and grow up “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” Eph. iv. 13. 15, 16. Phil. iii. 12, 13. 2 Pet. iii. 18. Heb. vi. 1. 2. To labour and endeavour the growth and progress of the gospel in others. This is the nature of grace, to manifest itself, and by that means to allure and gather others to its own quality. It is set forth in scripture by the names of light which shines abroad, of ointment and perfume which cannot be hid, of leaven and salt, which deriveth its own nature and relish upon a whole lump. Therefore the Holy Ghost was given in tongues, fiery tongues, and a rushing wind, all which have a quality of self-manifestation, and notifying themselves unto others. There is an excellent place to this purpose in the apostle; “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love,” Eph. iv. 15, 16. Where the apostle sheweth the manner of spiritual increase in the mystical body of Christ by the proportion of the growth of members in the natural body.

There must be a fellowship between the head and members, which in the mystical body here is twofold; growing unto him, and receiving from him. Looking in this work of growth upon Christ; 1. As the end of that growth unto which it drives; 2. As the fountain from whence it proceeds. That by growth we may have a more intimate and strong communion with him; by that virtue which we receive from him. So here are two necessary requisites unto

this duty of endeavouring the increase of the body ; to have Christ for our end unto which we work, and for our fountain out of which we derive our ability of working. Every true member of Christ is intent and vigilant upon the interest and honour of Christ ; and it belongs unto the honour of Christ to have a perfect body. The church is his fulness ; he esteems himself maimed and incomplete, if that should be finally deficient in any thing requisite to the integral perfection of it, and hence it is that every true christian puts forth the uttermost of his endeavours in his place to carry on the increase of his master's body ; as every true-hearted soldier that loves his general, is exceeding desirous, and to his power endeavours, that every company and regiment under his general's command may be, in all the officers and members of it, complete. Again, every member of Christ being unto him united, doth from him receive of his fulness grace for grace, and so worketh unto the same ends as the head doth. And as the water which first riseth out of the fountain doth not stand still there wherein it began, but goeth forward till it grow into a great river ; so those who are joined unto Christ as a fountain, do by reason of that vital communion which they have with the fountain, carry on the growth of the whole body ; and the more vigorous the life of Christ is in any part, the more actively doth that part work towards the edification of the whole.

Here is further required a fellowship and mutual communion of the members of the body within and amongst themselves ; unto which is first presupposed the organical and harmonious constitution and compacture of the body into one, out of which ariseth the form and beauty, the strength and firmness, the order and fitness that is in it unto those works which are

proper to it, intimated in those words, "Fitly joined together, and compacted." It is a metaphor drawn from carpenters and other artificers, who by several joints do so co-aptate and fit the parts of their work unto one another, that being put together and fastened, there may one whole structure or body grow out of them; and in that body this accurate fitness and intimation of the parts with one another, produceth an excellent strength, a beautiful order, and a ready serviceableness of each part to the other, and of all to the whole. So Jerusalem is said to be a city compacted within itself, Psa. cxxii. 3. As the ark (a type of the church) had the ribs and planks and parts thereof so closely fastened into one another, that no water might get in to drown it. And in the tabernacle all the curtains thereof were to be coupled together into one another, Exod. xxvi. 3. Christ is all for unity, and joining things into one, two natures united in one person, two parties reconciled by one Mediator, two people concorporated into one church; one family, one father, one seed, one head, one faith, one hope, one love, one worship, one body, one spirit, one end, and common salvation. Christ is not, loves not to be divided. This is a fundamental requisite unto the growth of the body, the preservation of its unity. The building must be fitly framed together, if you would have it grow into a holy temple to the Lord, Eph. ii. 21. Col. ii. 19. When there was most unity, there was greatest increase in the church; when they were all of one accord, of one heart, and one soul, then the Lord "added to the church daily such as should be saved," Acts ii. 46, 47. They that cause divisions and dissensions do not serve the Lord Jesus, and therefore they cannot but hinder the progress of his gospel, Rom. xvi. 17, 18. As in the natural so in

the mystical body, separations tend to the paining and grieving of that Spirit by which the body lives, Eph. iv. 30, 31. and by consequence hinders the growth of it. Our growth is by the apostle distributed into growth in knowledge, and growth in grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18. and divisions in the church are of themselves great hindrances unto both these; unto knowledge, because the most usual breaches in the church arise out of diversities of opinions publicly asserted and insisted on by the authors and followers of them. And though accidentally, where truth is embraced, it is held with more care, and searched into with more accuracy, because of the errors that oppose it; (as the fire is hottest in the coldest weather;) yet corrupt doctrine, being of the nature of a weed, or canker, to spread and eat further and further, it must needs consequently hinder the spreading, and in that kind, the growth of knowledge. Nor doth it less hinder the growth of grace; for while the people of God are all of one heart, and of one way, then all their communion runs into this one design of mutually edifying, comforting, supporting, encouraging one another in their holy faith; but when they are divided and broken into faction by different judgments, if there be not a greater abundance of humility, and spiritual wisdom, the spirits of men run out into heats and passions, and into perverse disputes, and mere notional contentions, which have ever been diminutions unto the power of godliness, 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4. When there are schisms in the body, the members will not have care one of another, 1 Cor. xii. 25. It were a blessed thing if we were in a condition capable of the apostle's exhortation, to speak all the same thing, to be perfectly joined in the same mind, and in the same judgment, to be of one mind, and to live in peace, 1 Cor. i. 10. 2 Cor. xiii.

11. But if that cannot be attained unto, let us yet all learn the apostle's other lesson, wherein we are otherwise minded, to depend upon God for revealing his will unto us. And whereunto we have attained to walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing, to remember that every difference in opinion doth not, ought not to dissipate or dissolve the unity of God's church. Even in Corinth, where the people were divided into several parties, yet they continued one church, 1 Cor. xi. 18.

The body thus constituted and compacted for the increase thereof.

Here are members severally distinct from one another; some principal, others ministerial, all concurring differently unto the service of the whole. If the heart should be in the head, or the liver in the shoulder, if there should be any unnatural dislocation of the vital or nutritive parts, the body could not grow, but perish. The way for the church to prosper and flourish, is for every member to keep in his own rank and order, to remember his own measure, to act in his own sphere, to manage his particular condition and relations with spiritual wisdom and humility; the eye to do the work of an eye, the hand of a hand. Say not as Absalom, "If I were a judge, I would do justice," 2 Sam. xv. 4. but consider what state God hath set thee in, and in that walk with God, and adorn the profession of the gospel, Rom. xii. 3. 1 Cor. xii. 8. 11. 29, 30. 2 Cor. x. 13, 14. Eph. iv. 7. Remember Uzzah, it was a good work he did, but because he did it out of order, having no call, God smote him for his error, 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. There are excellent works, which being done without the call of God, do not edify but disturb the body, Rom. x. 15. Heb. v. 4. Every man must walk in the church as God hath distributed and

called, and every man must in the calling wherein he was called abide with God, 1 Cor. vii. 17. 20. 24.

Here are joints and ligaments so fastening these members together, that each one may be serviceable to the increase of the whole, Col. ii. 19. There are bands which join the body to the head, without which it can neither grow nor live, namely, the Spirit of Christ, and faith in him, 1 Cor. vi. 17. Rom. viii. 9. Eph. iii. 17. and there are bands which join the parts of the body unto one another; as namely, the same Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 13. which Spirit of grace stirreth up every member to seek the growth and benefit of the whole, 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26. The same sincere love and truth which each member beareth unto all the rest, is called a bond of perfectness, Col. iii. 14. and the bond of peace, Eph. iv. 3. Now love is a most communicative grace, it will plant, and water, and feed, and spend itself for the good of the whole, it will deny itself to serve the body, as Christ did, Gal. v. 13.

Here is a measure belonging unto every part, some are in one office, others in another; some have one gift, others another, and all this for the perfecting of the saints, Eph. iv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. xii. 4. 11. one is able to teach, another to comfort, a third to convince, a fourth to exhort, a fifth to counsel, and every one of these is to be directed unto the edification and growth of the whole, Rom. xii. 3. 8. Eph. iv. 7. The apostle saith, that we are "fellow-citizens with the saints," Eph. ii. 19. Now as amongst fellow-citizens there useth to be an intercourse of mutual negotiation, one man hath one commodity, and another another, and these they usually barter withal. So amongst the saints one man is eminent in one grace, another in another, and according to their mutual in-

digences or abilities, they do interchangeably minister to one another towards the growth of the whole. And this is that which is here further requisite to the increase of the body called.

Here is the supply of service, and the supply of nourishment which one part affords unto another, and so to the whole. This is principally from the head to the members, called by the apostle, "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 19. of whose fulness we receive grace for grace, John i. 16. into whose image we are transformed from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. but it is proportionably between the members amongst themselves; for as several particular ingredients make up one cordial, and several instruments concur to the perfecting of one consummate work, and the beauty of every thing ariseth out of the variety and order, and mutual serviceableness that the parts thereof have unto one another: so is it in the church too, which Christ hath so tempered together, that they might all stand mutually in need of one another. Therefore we find the saints in scripture communicating to one another their experiences, temptations, deliverances, comforts, for their mutual edification, Psa. xxxiv. 3. 6. John i. 41. 45. iv. 29. 2 Cor. i. 4. 6. Phil. i. 12—14. Col. ii. 1, 2. And God's dealings with saints in particular are, therefore, registered in scripture, both that we might learn that way of building up one another, and that by their examples we might support our faith, and through patience and experience of the scripture have hope; because what hath been done unto one, is in the like condition applicable unto every other, James v. 10, 11. 17. Rom. xv. 4. 1 Cor. x. 6.

After all this there is an effectual working, a faculty to form, and to concoct the matter which hath been

subministered unto life and nourishment : which is the work of faith, and of the Spirit of Christ, whereby the soul of a believer, being sensible of want, desirous of supply, and pressing forward unto perfection, doth sweetly close with whatsoever the measure of any other part hath communicated unto it, converting it into growth and nourishment to itself, which the apostle calls, the mixing of the word with faith, Heb. iv. 2. Now,

[4.] He promiseth that the beauty of his church shall be as the olive-tree ; that as she should have the glory of the lily, the strength and extension of the cedar, so this spreading should not be a vain ostentation, but should have joined with it the flourishing and fruitfulness of the olive. Now the honour of the olive-tree standeth in two things ; perpetual greenness and most profitable fruit, which serveth both for light to cause the lamp to burn, Exod. xxvii. 20. and for nourishment to be eaten, Lev. vi. 15, 16. in the one respect it is an emblem of peace, it maketh the face shine, Psa. civ. 15. and in the other, it is an emblem of grace and spiritual gifts, 1 John ii. 20. These are the two most excellent benefits which God promiseth unto his people. He will speak peace unto them, Psa. lxxxv. 8. Isa. xxxii. 17. and he will give them grace and glory, Psa. lxxxiv. 11.

And as he promiseth, so should we practise these things, and learn to beautify the gospel of Christ, 1. With our good works, as the fruits of his grace, John xv. 8. 2. With our spiritual joy and comfort, as the fruits of his peace ; that others seeing the light and shining forth of a serene, calm, and peaceable conscience in our conversation, may thereby be brought in love with the ways of God. These two do mutually cherish and increase one another. The more con-

science we make of fruitfulness, the more way do we make for peace; when the waters of lust are sunk, the dove will quickly bring an olive-branch in: and the more the peace of God rules in the heart, the more will it strengthen the conscience and care of obedience, out of these considerations; 1. Out of thankfulness for so great a blessing; 2. Out of fear to forfeit it; 3. Out of wisdom to improve and increase it.

[5.] He promiseth that his church shall be as the smell of Lebanon, and that the scent of it shall be as the wine of Lebanon, as elsewhere we find her compared to a garden of spices, Cant. iv. 12—14. she shall be filled with the sweet savour of the gospel of Christ. "Thanks be unto God," saith the apostle, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ," 2 Cor. ii. 14, 15. where there are two metaphors, one of a sweet ointment, the other of a triumph. The name of Christ is compared to an ointment, Cant. i. 3. and preaching of the gospel, which is making manifest the savour of this ointment, and is called the bearing of Christ's name, Acts ix. 15. Now, this sweet savour is annexed unto a triumphal solemnity, because in all times of public joy, they were wont to anoint themselves with sweet oil, which is therefore called, "The oil of gladness," Psal. xlv. 7, 8. Isa. lxi. 3. For in times of mourning they did abstain from sweet ointments, 2 Sam. xiv. 2. Dan. x. 2, 3. The gospel therefore being a message of great joy, Luke ii. 13. a leading captivity captive, and the means whereby Christ rideth forth gloriously, conquering and to conquer, Psal. xlv. 3, 4. cx. 2. Rev. vi. 2. therefore they who brought these good tidings, are said to be as a

sweet savour, whose lips drop sweet smelling myrrh, Cant. v. 13. and whose doctrine is compared to the powders of the merchant, Cant. iii. 6. and the time of the gospel is called an accepted time, a day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. that is, a time of singular joy and solemnity, a continued Easter, or festival, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. and here withal he promiseth likewise, that his people should offer up spiritual incense and services unto him in prayers, thanksgivings, alms, and good works, Ezek. xx. 41.

And as he promiseth, so we should practise these things; our care should be to let our lips and lives breathe forth nothing but grace and edification, Col. iv. 6. To be frequent in the spiritual sacrifices of prayer, thanksgiving, and good works, which may be as an odour of a sweet savour to God, Phil. iv. 18. Rev. viii. 4. To labour to leave behind us a good name; not out of vain-glory, or an empty, ambitious affectation of honour, but out of the conscience of a holy life, which makes the name smell better than sweet ointment, Ecc. vii. 1.

[6.] He promiseth, that they who dwell under his shadow shall return: which words admit of a double sense, and so infer a double promise and a double duty. We may understand the words thus, When Israel have repented and are brought home to God again, they shall then have security, defence, protection, refreshment under the comforts of his grace against all the violence of temptation, as a spreading tree doth afford a sweet shade unto the weary traveller, and shelters him from the injuries of the heat, Job vii. 2. Isa. iv. 6. Mic. iv. 4. Zech. iii. 10. Whereby is signified the secure, quiet, and comfortable condition of God's people under the protection of his providence and promises.

And as he promiseth such a condition, so should we in all our troubles not trust in an arm of flesh, or betake ourselves to mere human wisdom, and carnal counsels, which are too thin shelters against God's displeasure, or the enemies of the church : but we must fly unto him to hide us, we must find spiritual refreshment in his ordinances, promises, and providence, get his wing to cover us, and his presence to be a little sanctuary unto us, and the joy of the Lord to be our strength, Psa. lvii. 2. xci. 1. Isa. xxvi. 20. Neh. viii. 10. When the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the land for their iniquity ; when flood and fire, storm and tempest, the fury of anger, the strength of battle, are poured out upon a people ; when a destroying angel is sent abroad with a commission to kill and slay, Ezek. ix. 5, 6. when death, the king of terrors, rideth up and down in triumph, stripping men of treasures, lands, friends, honours, pleasures, making them a house in darkness, where master and servant, princes and prisoners are all alike ; to have then an ark with Noah, a Zoar with Lot, a Goshen in Egypt : to have one arm of this olive-tree spread over us, to have one promise out of God's word, one sentence from the mouth of Christ promising paradise unto us, is infinitely of more value to a languishing spirit, than all the diadems of the earth, or the peculiar treasure of princes.

If we take the words in order as they lie, then the mercy here promised is, that when God shall restore and repair his church, they who dwell under the comforts of it, should return and be converted to the knowledge and obedience which should be there taught them : when the branch of the Lord is beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth excellent and comely, then he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be

called holy, Isa. iv. 2, 3. then on every vessel in Judah and Jerusalem shall be inscribed, "Holiness unto the Lord," Zech. xiv. 20, 21. then the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall speak plainly, Isa. xxxii. 2—4.

And this should be the endeavour of every one who liveth under the shade of this tree, under the purity of God's ordinances, under the pious government and constitution of such a church, or family as is here described, (especially in such times when on the one side the world is so much loosened, and estranged from us; and on the other side reformation in the church is so much desired,) to convert and turn unto the Lord. All endeavours of reformation in a church are miserably defective, when they come short of this end, (which is the ultimate reason of them all,) namely, the repentance and conversion of those who dwell under the shadow of it. When God promiseth to give unto his church the glory of Lebanon, and the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, the consequence of this beauty and reformation in the church is, the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame shall leap, the dumb shall sing, the parched ground shall be a pool, the thirsty land springs of water, Isa. xxxv. 5—7. The wolf, the leopard, the lion, the bear, the asp, the cockatrice, shall be so turned from the fierceness and malignity of their natures, that they shall not hurt nor destroy in all the holy mountain, but a little child shall lead them all, Isa. xi. 6. 9. It is a great happiness and advantage to live under the shade of a godly government; many men have reason to bless God all their days, that they were in their childhood trained up in such a school, where piety was taught them as well as

learning, where they had means as well of conversion, as of institution; that they lived in such a family where the master of it was of Joshua's mind, "I and my house will serve the Lord," Josh. xxiv. 15. Salvation comes to a whole house, when the governor thereof is converted, Luke xix. 9. Acts xvi. 33, 34. I shall never look upon a church as reformed to purpose, till I find reformation work conversion; till piety, and charity, and justice, and mercy, and truth, and humility, and gentleness, and goodness, and kindness, and meekness, and singleness of heart, and zeal for godliness, and mutual edification, and the life and power of religion are more conspicuous than before. When the very head-stone was brought forth, and the last work in the building of the temple was finished, yet the people must then cry "Grace, grace unto it," Zech. iv. 7. intimating that reformation is never indeed consummate till the blessing of God make it effectual unto those uses for which it was by him appointed. Church reformation should be like Paul's epistles, which always close in duties of obedience.

[7.] He promiseth, that they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: in which two expressions are set forth two excellent and wholesome consequences of affliction. 1. The corn, though it die first, and suffer much from frost, hail, snow, tempest, yet when the spring comes, it revives and breaks through it all; so God promiseth to his church in the saddest condition, a reviving again, and that it shall be brought forth into the light, Ezek. xxxvii. 12. Mic. vii. 9. 2. The vine when it is pruned and lopped, will not only revive and spread again, but will bring forth the more fruit, and cast forth the more fragrant smell: so God promiseth unto his people not only a reviving out of their afflictions, (in which respect

haply it was that Christ was buried in a garden, to note that death itself doth not destroy our bodies, but only sow them, the dew of herbs will revive them again, 1 Cor. xv. 42—44.) but further a profiting by afflictions, that we may say with David, "It is good for us;" when we find it bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness after we have been exercised therein.

And as he promiseth these things, so we should learn to turn these promises into prayer and into practice; when we seem in our own eyes cast out of God's sight, yet we must not cast them out of our sight, but as Jonah in the whale's belly, and as Daniel in Babylon, pray towards his holy temple still. The woman of Canaan would not be thrust off with a seeming rejection, not utterly despond under a grievous temptation, but by a singular acumen and spiritual sagacity discerned matter of argument, in that which looked like a denial, Matt. xv. 27. Soap and fuller's earth at the first putting on seem to stain and to foul clothes, when the use and end is to purify them. And God's frowns and delays may seem to be the denials of prayer, when haply his end is to make the granting of them the more comfort. Therefore in all troubles we must not give over looking towards God, but say with Job, "Though he slay me, I will trust in him."

And after all afflictions we must learn to express the fruit of them, to come out of them refined, as silver out of the fire, to have thereby our faith strengthened, our hope confirmed, our love inflamed, our fruit and obedience increased, our sin taken away, and our iniquities purged, Isa. xxvii. 9. To be chastened and taught, Psal. xciv. 12. to be chastened and converted, Jer. xxxviii. 18. If we have run away from our duties, and been cast into a whale's belly for it, when we are delivered, let us be sure to look

better to our resolutions afterwards. After all that is come upon us for our sins, take heed of breaking his commandments again, Ezra ix. 13, 14. As Job's riches after his, so we should endeavour that our graces after our afflictions may be doubled upon us, and that the scent of our holy example may, like spices bruised, or the grapes of Lebanon crushed in the wine-press, give a more fragrant smell to God and man, as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.

He promiseth that all these should be fruits of Lebanon, of the best and most perfect kind. There are many evidences of the goodness of God even in the lives of Pagan men ; we read of Abimelech forbearing to sin against God, Gen. xx. 4. 6. and of his and Ephron's singular kindness to Abraham, Gen. xx. 14, 15. xxiii. 10, 11. 15. No argument more common than this of the virtues, the temperance, prudence, justice, mercy, patience, fidelity, friendships, affability, magnanimity of many heathen men ; inso-much that some have presumed so far as to make them dispositive to salvation. But all these are but wild grapes, bitter clusters, the fruits of an empty vine, not worth the gathering in order to salvation : but the graces which God bestoweth upon his church, are of a more spiritual and perfect nature, proceeding from faith in Christ, from love of God, from a conscience cleansed from dead works, from an intention to glorify God and adorn the gospel, from a new nature, and from the Spirit of Christ, conforming his servants unto himself : they are not grapes of Sodom, but grapes of Lebanon.

And as he thus blesseth us, in the like manner should we serve him, not offer unto him the refuse, the halt, and blind, and maimed, for sacrifice, not

give unto him of that which cost us nothing, but go to Lebanon for all our sacrifices, covet earnestly the best gifts, press forward and labour to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Give unto him our lilies, the beauties of our minority ; and our cedars, the strength of our youth ; and our olives, and grapes, and corn, and wine ; whatever gifts he hath bestowed on us, use them unto his service and honour again ; not content ourselves with the form of godliness, with the morality of virtue, with the outside of duties, with the seeds and beginnings of holiness, (he has none who thinks he hath enough,) but strive who shall outrun one another unto Christ, as Peter and John did towards his sepulchre. It was a high pitch which Moses aimed at, when he said, " I beseech thee show me thy glory," Exod. xxxiii. 18. Nothing would satisfy him but fulness and satiety itself. Be sure that all your graces come from Sion, and from Lebanon, that they grow in Immanuel's land ; till Christ own them, God will not accept them. Moral virtues and outward duties, grapes of Sodom, may commend us unto men ; nothing but inward, spiritual, and rooted graces, the grapes of Lebanon, will commend us unto God. To do only the outward works of duty, without the inward principle, is at best but to make ourselves like those mixed beasts, elephants and camels, in the civil law, which, though they do the work of tame beasts, yet have the nature of wild ones. Moral virtue, without spiritual piety, doth not commend any man unto God ; for we are not accepted unto him, but in Christ, and we are not in Christ but by the Holy Spirit.

SERMON VI.

EPHRAIM SHALL SAY, WHAT HAVE I TO DO ANY MORE WITH IDOLS? I HAVE HEARD HIM, AND OBSERVED HIM: I AM LIKE A GREEN FIR-TREE. FROM ME IS THY FRUIT FOUND.—HOSEA XIV. 8.

THE conversion of Israel unto God in their trouble, was accompanied with a petition and a covenant. A petition imploring mercy and grace from God, and a covenant promising thanksgivings and obedience unto him. And God is pleased in his answer to have a distinct respect unto both these; for whereas they petition, first for pardon, that God would take away all iniquity, he promiseth to heal their backslidings, and to love them freely; and whereas they pray for blessings, Receive us into favour, do us good, God likewise maketh promises of that in great variety, expressed by the several metaphors of fertility, answering to the name and blessings promised formerly unto Ephraim. And all this we have handled out of the four preceding verses.

Now in this eighth verse, God is pleased not only graciously to accept, but further to put to his seal, and to confirm the covenant which they make, promising that by the assistance of his Spirit they should be enabled to do what they had undertaken. This is the greatest ground of confidence that we can have to bind ourselves in holy covenants unto God, even the promise of his strength and assistance enabling us to keep covenant with him. Therefore when David had

said, "I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments;" it follows a little after, "Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me thy judgments," Psa. cxix. 106. 108. David was confident that God would not only accept his covenant, but teach him how to keep it, and that made him the more confident to bind himself by it.

In the original, the words are only thus; "Ephraim, what have I to do any more with idols?" which therefore some would have to be the words of God spoken unto Ephraim. But there is nothing more usual in scripture than an ellipsis of the verb, and we find this very verb omitted, and yet necessary to be supplied, Isa. v. 9. and in this place the Chaldee paraphrast, and from him the best interpreters, with our translators, have supplied it. Thus, "Ephraim shall say:" and so it is God's confirmation of the promise which penitent Ephraim had made, and his undertaking for him, that he should indeed be enabled to perform his covenant.

"What have I to do any more with idols?" It is an interrogation not on'y importing a negative, I will not any more have to do with them, but also a vehement detestation of them, and indignation against them, as that of David to Abishai, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. and that of Elisha to Jehoram, 2 Kings iii. 13. and that of the devil to Christ, Matt. viii 29.

"With idols." The original word signifieth likewise sorrows and grief of mind, a fit word to express their sin and repentance. What have we to do with these idols and sorrows any more? They can produce no good, they can hear no prayers, they can work no deliverance, they can bring nothing but evil and anguish to us, and therefore we will not follow or

seek unto them any more. Here then is a solemn detestation as of all their other sins, so of that especially which had most dishonoured God, most wounded their own consciences, and procured most sorrow unto themselves, with God's confirmation of it.

After this, follow several promises of special mercies.

1. Of hearing and answering their prayers: "I have heard" or answered him, or, as others render it, "I will hear him." 2. Of fatherly care and providence over them: "I have observed him," or fixed mine eyes upon him; I have strictly considered his condition, that I might proportion my mercies thereunto. It is a symbol; (1.) Of vigilant care and most intent and solicitous inspection and providence; "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine," *Psa. xx. xiii. 18, 19.* (2.) Of direction and counsel; "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go. I will guide or counsel thee with mine eye," *Psa. xxxii. 8.* (3.) Of honour and exaltation; "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous, but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted," *Job xxxvi. 7.* And, (4.) It is an expression of hearing prayers: God is said to have his eye open unto the supplication of his servants, to hearken unto them in all that they call upon him for, *1 Kings viii. 52.* and the "eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears open unto their cry," *Psa. xxxiv. 15.* The church had before professed herself to be an orphan, that stood in need of tuition and protection: and here God promiseth to cast his eye, and to place his affection upon her, to look to her, to be her tutor and guardian, to govern her with his special providence

and wisdom, to take notice of her wants, and supply them ; to take notice of her desires, and fulfil them ; to take notice of her condition, and accordingly in all respects to provide for her. 3. Of refreshment from the heat and violence of temptations, or any kind of afflictions, by the metaphor of a fir-tree, which being ever green, and casting a large shade, doth afford much comfort and reviving to the weary traveller. 4. Because the fir-tree, though comfortable in regard of the shade, is yet unfruitful ; therefore he further promiseth to be a root of blessings, and all kind of spiritual graces unto them, " From me is thy fruit found ;" that is, From me is, or shall be thy fruit, as Mal. ii. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 22. Zeph. iii. 13. though the word " found" may here seem to imply and direct unto an inquiry after the foundation and original of the fruit here mentioned. Though all thy fruit of good works and new obedience may seem to proceed from thyself, and to be thine own, yet if thou be careful to inquire after the root of them, thou wilt find that they come from us, though they grow upon thee, and that thou bringest them forth only by the help, supply, and vigour of my grace bestowed on thee : thou doest them, but the power and strength whereby thou doest them proceeds from me.

These words, then, are the sum of God's answer, which he makes unto the covenant of his people. They return the calves of their lips, God hears and accepts them. They renounce carnal confidence, in men, in horses, in idols ; and when they look off, and turn away from these, then God looketh upon them with a fatherly eye of care, providence, counsel, and protection ; " I have observed him." They will not say any more to the work of their hands, " Ye are our gods," nor any longer make lies their refuge ; and God

enables them to do as they have said, and affordeth comfort and refreshment unto them, as the shade of a fir-tree unto a weary traveller. Lastly, they believe and acknowledge that when they are fatherless, and destitute of all help, there is mercy in God to comfort and provide for them ; and this God makes good too. Mercy of protection, “ I am as a green fir-tree ;” and mercy of bounty and benediction, “ from me is thy fruit found ;” by the one defending them against their fears, by the other enabling them unto their duties. Thus God doth enlarge and proportion his mercy to the uttermost extent of Israel’s prayer or promise, and when they have no help or comfort out of him, he himself becomes all in all unto them, making a thorough compensation for every thing which they part with for his sake, and causing them to find in him alone all that comfort and satisfaction to their desires, which in vain they sought for in other things.

The parts contain God’s promise enabling Israel to perform theirs ; “ Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols ?” and God’s special regard to their prayers, “ I have heard him ;” to their persons, “ and observed him ;” illustrated by two metaphors, the one importing protection and defence, “ I am as a green fir-tree ;” the other, grace and benediction, “ from me is thy fruit found.”

“ Ephraim shall say.” This is God’s speech and promise, setting to his seal and gracious ratification to the covenant that Israel made, ver. 2, 3. without which it would have been null and void for a man by believing setteth to his seal to the truth of God, John iii. 33. So God by assisting setteth to his seal to the purpose of man : but with this great difference, man’s seal is but a subscription and confession of that which was firm before ; for all God’s promises

are yea and amen, and faith doth not put certainty into the promise of God, Rom. iii. 3, 4. 2 Tim. ii. 13. but into the heart of man concerning the promises, Rom. iv. 16. 2 Tim. i. 12. but God's seal is a confirmation and making efficacious the promise of man, which otherwise would vanish into a lie; all our sufficiency is from him, we can neither will, nor do any thing further than we receive from him both to will and to do. Pharaoh made promise after promise, and brake them as fast, Exod. viii. 8. 28. ix. 28. Israel makes promises one while, and quickly starts aside like a deceitful bow, as ice which melts in the day, and hardens again in the night, Psa. lxxviii. 34. 38. Jer. xxxiv. 15, 16. to-day they will, and to-morrow they will not again; they repent to-day, and to-morrow they repent of their repenting; like the sluggard in his bed, that puts out his arm to rise, and then pulls it in again. So unstable and impotent is man in all his resolutions, till God say amen to what he purposeth, and establisheth the heart by his own grace, Heb. xiii. 9. When the waters stood as a wall on the right hand and on the left of Israel, as they passed through the Red Sea, this was a work of God's own power; for water is unstable, and cannot keep together by its own strength, nor be contained within any bounds of its own. So great a work is it to see the mutable wills and resolutions of men kept close to any pious and holy purposes.

The point we learn from hence is this, that our conversion and amendment of life is not sufficiently provided for by the band, obligation, or covenant of our own, whereby we solemnly promise and undertake it, except God be pleased by his free grace to establish and enable the heart unto the performance of it: or thus, a penitent man's conversion and covenant

of new obedience hath its firmness in the promise and free grace of God. Israel here in the confidence of God's mercy prays for pardon and blessings; and in the confidence of his grace, maketh promise of reformation and amendment of life; but all this is but like a written instrument or indenture, which is invalid and of no effect, till the parties concerned have mutually sealed and set to their hands. Till God be pleased to promise us that we shall do that which we have promised unto him, and do as it were make our own covenants for us, all will prove too weak and vanishing to continue. The grace of God unto the purposes of men is like grain to colours died, or like oil to colours in a table or picture, which makes them hold fresh, and not fade away.

There is a necessary and indissoluble dependence of all second causes upon the first, without whose influence and concurrence they never live, move, have, or continue in their being, Acts xvii. 28. Heb. i. 3. He who is first of causes, and last of ends, doth use and direct the necessary, voluntary, contingent motions and activities of all second causes unto whatsoever ends he himself is pleased to pre-ordain. And this the natural and necessary concatenation of things doth require, that that which is the most absolute, supreme, first, and most independent will, wisdom, and power of all others, should govern, order, and direct all other wills, powers, and wisdoms that are subordinate to, and inferior to it, unto whatsoever uses and purposes he who hath the absolute dominion and sovereignty over all, is pleased to appoint. It cannot be other than a marvellous diminution unto the greatness of God, and a too low esteem of the absoluteness of that majesty which belongs unto him, to make any counsels, decrees,

or purposes of his to receive their ultimate form and stamp from the previous and intercurrent casualties or conditions of the creature. This I have always looked on as the principal cause of those dangerous errors concerning grace, free will, and the decrees of God, wherewith the churches of Christ have been so miserably in the former ages, and in this of ours, exercised by the subtlety of Satan, and by the pride of corrupt-minded men; namely, the too low and narrow thoughts and conception which men have framed to themselves of God, the not acquiescing in his sovereign dominion and absolute power of disposing all things which he made, unto whatsoever uses he himself pleaseth: into which I am sure the holy scripture doth resolve all, Matt. xviii. 25, 26. Rom. ix. 18. 21. xi. 33. 36. Eph. i. 5. 9. 11. Psal. cxxxv. 6.

Even in the sinful actions of men, God's influence and providence hath a particular hand. As actions, his influence; as sinful, his providence. 1. His influence to the natural motion and substance of the action, though not to the wickedness of it; for this standeth not in being or perfection (else the fountain of being and perfection must needs be the first cause of it) but in defect and privation of perfection. As when a hand draweth a line by a crooked rule, the line is from the hand, but the crookedness of it is from the rule: or, as when a man goeth lamely, the motion as motion is from the natural faculty, but the lameness of the motion is from the defect and viciousness of the faculty. A swearer could not speak an oath, nor a murderer reach out his hand to strike a blow, but by the force of those natural faculties which in and from God have all their being and working. But that these natural motions are by profaneness

or malice directed unto ends morally wicked, this proceedeth from the viciousness and defect which is in the second cause making use of God's gifts unto his own dishonour. 2. The providence of God hath a notable hand in the guiding, ordering, and disposing of these actions, as sinful, unto the ends of his own glory in the declaration of his power, wisdom, and justice, unto which the sins of wicked men are perforce carried on, contrary to those ends which they themselves in sinning did propose unto themselves. As an artificer useth the force of natural causes unto artificial effects: as a huntsman useth the natural enmity of the dog against the fox or wolf, unto the preservation of the lambs which otherwise would be destroyed; though the dog himself by nature is as great an enemy to the lamb as the fox. As the Pharisees were as great enemies to religion as the Sadducees, yet Paul wisely made use of their enmity amongst themselves for his own preservation and deliverance from them both. Nothing more usual than for God to manage and direct the sins of men to the bringing about of his own purposes and counsels, Gen. i. 20. 1 Sam. ii. 25. 1 Kings ii. 26, 27. 2 Sam. xii. 11. compared with 2 Sam. xvi. 22. Isa. x. 5—7. Acts iv. 28. Psa. lxxvi. 10. But now unto gracious actions, which belong not at all unto nature as nature, but only as inspired and actuated with spiritual and heavenly principles, a more singular and notable influence of God is required, not only to the substance of the action, but more especially to the rectitude and goodness of it; for we have no sufficiency of ourselves, not so much as unto the first offers and beginnings of good in our thoughts, 2 Cor. iii. 5. When we are bid to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, it must be in dependence on the power,

and in confidence of the aid of God, for it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 11—13. when we covenant to turn unto God, we must withal pray unto him to turn us, Lam. v. 21. Jer. xxxi. God commands us to turn ourselves, and to make us a new heart and a new spirit, that we may live, Ezek. xviii. 30—32. but withal, he telleth us that it is he who gives us one heart, and one way, and a new spirit, that we may walk in his statutes, Ezek. xi. 19, 20. Jer. xxxii. 39. He giveth us the power to make us able, the heart to make us willing, the art to walk, the proficiency to improve, the perseverance to finish and perfect holiness. David cannot run in the way of God's commandments, till he enlarge his heart, Psal. cxix. 32. nothing can find the way to heaven, but that which comes first from heaven, John iii. 13. we cannot give unto God any thing but of his own, "Who am I," saith David, "and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee," 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

For the further understanding of this point, and of the sweet concord and concurrence between the will of man converted, and the effectual grace of God converting, we shall set down these few propositions.

I. That there is in man by nature a power or faculty which we call free will, whereunto belongeth such an indifferency and indeterminacy in the manner of working, that whether a man will a thing, or nill it, choose it, or turn from it, he doth in neither move contrary to his own natural principles of working. A stone moving downward, doth move naturally, upward, contrary to its nature, and so violently. But which way soever the will moves, it moves according

to the condition of its created being, wherein it was so made, as when it chose one part of a contradiction, it retained an inward and fundamental habitude unto the other, like those gates which are so made, as that they open both ways. So that as the tongue which was wont to swear or blaspheme, when it is converted, doth by the force of the same faculty of speaking, being newly sanctified, utter holy and gracious speeches: so the will, which being corrupted did choose evil, and only evil, being sanctified, doth use the same manner of operation in choosing that which is good: the created nature of it remaining still one and the same, but being now guided and sanctified by different principles. This we speak only with respect to the natural manner of its working; for if we speak of liberty in a moral or theological sense, so it is certain, that the more the will of man doth observe the right order of its proper objects, and last end, the more free and noble it is, (the very highest perfection of free will standing in an immutable adherency unto God, as the ultimate end of the creature, and all ability of receding or falling from him being the deficiency and not the perfection of free will.) And therefore the more the will of man doth cast off and reject God, the more base, servile, and captive it grows. In which sense we affirm against the papists, that by nature man since the fall of Adam, hath no free will or natural power to believe and turn unto God, or to prepare himself thereunto.

II. In man fallen, and being thereby universally in all his faculties leavened with vicious and malignant principles, there is a native pravity and corrupt force, which putteth forth itself in resisting all those powerful workings of the word and Spirit of grace, that oppose themselves against the body of sin, and move

the will unto holy resolutions : for the wisdom of the flesh cannot be subject unto the law of God, Rom. viii. 7. The flesh will lust against the spirit, as being contrary thereunto, Gal. v. 17. an uncircumcised heart will always resist the Holy Spirit, Acts vii. 51. there is such a natural antipathy between the purity of the word and the impurity of the will of man, that he naturally refuseth to hear, and snuffeth at it, and pulleth away the shoulder, and hardeneth the heart, and stoppeth the ears, and shutteth the eyes, and setteth up strong holds, and high reasonings against the ways of God, and is never so well as when he can get off all sights and thoughts of God, and be as it were without God in the world, Jer. v. 3. vi. 10. 17. 23. xix. 15. Mal. i. 13. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

III. According to the degrees and remainders of this natural corruption, so far forth as it is unmortified and unsubdued by the power of grace, this original force doth proportionably put forth itself in withstanding and warring against the Spirit of God even in the regenerate themselves. A notable example whereof we have in Asa, of whom it is said, that he was wrath with Hanani, the seer, and put him in a prison-house, and was in rage with him, when he reprov'd him for his carnal confidence, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. and the apostle doth in many words both state, and bewail the warring of the law of his members against the law of his mind, so that when he did with the one serve the law of God, he did with the other serve the law of sin, and was unable to do the thing which he would, and the evil which he would not, he did do by the strength of sin that dwelt in him, Rom. vii. 14, 15.

IV. We are to distinguish of the will of God, which is set forth in scripture two manner of ways : there

is that will of God whereby he requires us to work, and which he hath appointed to be observed by us. His will signified in precepts and prohibitions. "This is the will of God," saith the apostle, "even your sanctification," 1 Thess. iv. 3. So we are said to prove, to try, to do God's will, or that which is pleasing in his sight, Matt. vii. 21. Rom. xii. 2. John viii. 29. and there is the will of his purpose and counsel, according unto which he himself in his own secret and unsearchable good pleasure is pleased to work; for he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, Eph. i. 11. whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that he doth in heaven and earth, Psa. cxxxv. 6. And no second causes can do any thing else, though they ever so proudly break the order of God's revealed will, but what his hand and counsel had before determined, Acts iv. 28. The will of God's precept and command is every day violated, resisted, and broken through by wicked men unto their own destruction. "How often would I, and ye would not?" Matt. xxiii. 37. Jer. xiii. 11. But the will of God's counsel and purpose cannot be resisted nor withstood by all the powers of the world; the counsel of the Lord must stand; and those very agents that work purposely to disappoint and subvert it, do by those very workings of theirs bring it to pass: and when by their own intentions they are enemies to it, by God's wonderful ordering and directing, they are executioners of it, Rom. ix. 19. Psa. xxxiii. 11. cxv. 3. Prov. xix. 21. Isa. xlvi. 10. Josh. xxiv. 9, 10.

V. According unto this distinction of God's will, we are to distinguish of his call. Some are called by the will of his precept, when they have the will of God made known unto them, and are thereby

persuaded unto the obedience of it in the ministry of the gospel ; in which sense our Saviour saith, " Many are called, but few chosen," Matt. xx. 16. and unto those who refuse to come unto him that they might have life, he yet saith, " These things I say that you might be saved," John v. 34. 40. Others are called, ordained first unto eternal life by the free love and grace of God, and then thereunto brought by the execution of that his decree and purpose in the powerful calling and translating them from darkness unto light. And this is to be called according unto purpose, Rom. viii. 28. namely, the purpose and counsel of showing mercy to whom he will show mercy, Rom. ix. 18.

VI. They who are called, only as the hen calleth her chickens, with the mere outward call or voice of Christ in the evangelical ministry, may and do resist this call, and so perish: Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were outwardly called by the most powerful ministerial means that ever the world enjoyed, both in doctrine and miracles ; and yet our Saviour tells them that they shall be in a worse condition in the day of judgment than Tyre, Sidon, or Sodom, Matt. xi. 21. 24. So the prophet complains, " Who hath believed our report ? or to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?" Isa. liii. 1. Which the evangelist applies unto the argument of conversion, John xii. 37. 40. for so the hand or arm of the Lord is said to be with his ministers, when by their ministry men do turn to the Lord, Acts xi. 21. And the same prophet again, or Christ in him, complains, " All the day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people," Isa. lxv. 2. Rom. x. 21. So disobedient and gainsaying, that we find

them resolve sometimes point blank, contrary to the call of God, Jer. xlv. 16. 27. xviii. 11, 12. ii. 25. Matt. xxiii. 37.

VII. They who are called inwardly and spiritually with a heavenly call, with such a call as pursueth the counsel and purpose of God for their salvation, though they do resist, and corruption in them doth strive to bear up against the grace of Christ, yet they do not resist finally unto the repelling or defeating of the operation of God's effectual grace: but they are thereby framed to embrace, approve, and submit unto that call, God himself working a good will in them, captivating their thoughts unto the obedience of Christ, and working in them that which is pleasing in his own sight, Phil. ii. 13. 2 Cor. x. 5. Heb. xiii. 21.

And this is done by a double act.

1. An act of spiritual teaching, and irradiating the mind and judgment with heavenly light, called by the prophet the writing of the law in the heart, and putting it into the inward parts, Jer. xxxi. 33. 2 Cor. iii. 3. and by our Saviour, the Father's teaching, John vi. 45. and the Holy Spirit's convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, John xvi. 8—11. and by the apostle, a demonstration of the Spirit and power, 1 Cor. ii. 4. A spiritual revelation of wisdom out of the word unto the conscience, Eph. i. 17. For though we are to condemn fanatical revelations besides the word, and without it; yet we must acknowledge spiritual revelation, or manifestation of the divine light and power of the word, by the Holy Spirit, in the minds of men converted: for the word of God being a spiritual object, doth unto the saving knowledge of it require such a spiritual quality in the faculty which must know it, as may be able to pass a right

judgment upon it ; for spiritual things are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is true, that hypocrites and other wicked men may have very much notional and intellectual knowledge of the scriptures, and those holy things therein revealed, Heb. vi. 4. 2 Pet. ii. 21. But none of that knowledge amounteth unto that which is called the teaching of God, and a spiritual demonstration : for the mysteries of the gospel were unto this end revealed, that by them we might be brought unto the obedience of Christ ; and therefore the knowledge of them is never proportioned or commensurate to the object, till the mind be thereby made conformed unto Christ, till the conceptions which are framed in us touching God, and sin, and grace, and heaven, and eternal things, be suitable to those which were in the mind of Christ, 1 Cor. ii. 16. Evangelical truths are not fitted unto mere intellectual, but unto practical judgment. It is such a knowledge of Christ as may fill us with the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 18, 19. A knowledge that must work communion with Christ, and conformity unto him, Phil. iii. 10. A knowledge that must produce a good conversation, James iii. 13. “ He that saith he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him,” 1 John ii. 3, 4. We do not know Christ till we know him as our chief good, as our choicest treasure, as our unsearchable riches, as elect, and precious, and desirable, and altogether lovely ; and the fairest of ten thousand, and worthy all acceptation, in comparison of whom all the world besides is as dung. The knowledge of Christ is not seeing only, but seeing and tasting, Ps. xxxiv. 8. cxix. 103. And therefore they who in one sense are said to have known God, Rom. i. 21. are yet in the same place, ver. 28. said not to have God in their

knowledge. It is an excellent speech of the philosopher, that such as every man is in himself, such is the end that he works unto, and such notions he hath of that good which is his end. And therefore it is impossible that a wicked frame of heart can ever look upon any supernatural object as his last end, or as principally desirable. If I should see a man choose a small trifle before a rich jewel, however he should profess to know the excellency, and to value the richness of that jewel ; yet I should conclude that he did not indeed understand the worth of it aright. And therefore unto the perfect and proper knowledge of supernatural things, there is required a special work of the grace and Spirit of Christ opening the heart, and working it to a spiritual constitution proportionable to such kind of truths about which it is conversant. The scripture every where attributeth this work unto God, and his Spirit : it is he that giveth a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, Deut. xxix. 4. It is he that giveth a heart to know him, Jer. xxiv. 7. It is he that manifesteth himself unto those that love him, John xiv. 21. It is he that revealeth unto us by his Spirit the things of God, 1 Cor. ii. 10. It is he that giveth us an understanding, 1 John v. 20. and that opens the understanding to understand the scriptures, Luke xxiv. 45. Acts xvi. 14. It is he that teacheth us to call Christ our Lord, Matt. xvi. 17. 1 Cor. xii. 3. for the voice of carnal and corrupt reason is, " We will not have this man to reign over us," Luke xix. 14. Every man naturally frameth and shapeth his notions of doctrinal matters unto the manner of his conscience and conversation, embracing that which is consonant, and rejecting that which is dissonant thereunto, Mic. ii. 11. Isa. xxx. 10, 11. To the unclean every thing is

unclean, because the very mind and conscience of such men is defiled, Tit. i. 15. This then is the first work in effectual calling, the opening of the eye of the mind rightly to conceive of the things of God, of the guilt of sin, of the heaviness of wrath, of the peril of perishing, of the weight and moment of damnation and salvation, of the things that concern its everlasting peace, of the righteousness of Christ, of the beauties of holiness, of the exceeding abundant weight of glory, of the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and the unspeakable and glorious joy shed forth into the heart by believing. These truths the heart is so convinced of, as seriously to ponder them, and to fix its deepest and saddest considerations upon them.

2. An act of spiritual inclining and effectual determining the will of man to embrace the ultimate dictate of a mind thus enlightened, and to make a most free, spontaneous, and joyful choice of supernatural good things thus rightly apprehended, upon a clear and deliberate consideration of their excellency above all other things, Phil. iii. 8. This act of choosing the Lord for our portion and chiefest good; and of cleaving unto him, we find often mentioned in the scripture, Deut. xxx. 19. Josh. xxiv. 22. Psal. lxxxiv. 10. Heb. xi. 25. Acts xi. 23. Psal. cxix. 30, 31. 173. When the soul of a man is so thoroughly by God's teaching convinced of the danger and misery of sin, wherein so long as a man continueth he lives only to dishonour God, and to undo himself; he prizes the benefit of righteousness in Christ, whereby he is reconciled unto God, and adopted unto a glorious inheritance; and of the beauty of holiness, whereby he is conformed unto Christ his head, and fitted for the inheritance. These previous acts of heavenly teaching, are always seconded with effectual operations

upon the will, suitable unto themselves : for the liberty of the will doth not stand in a peremptory indifferency unto any object whatsoever ; (else there should be no liberty in heaven ;) this is a defect and imperfection, not any matter of power or freedom. But the liberty of will standeth in this, that being a reasonable appetite, it is apt to be led one way or another, to choose one thing or another, according to the dictates of reason, and with subjection to that which is made appear to be the supreme end and happiness of the soul ; for every faculty is naturally subservient to the ultimate good of that nature whereof it is a faculty, and should monstrously exorbitate* from its use and end, if it should put forth itself to the destruction, or refuse to close with that which is the happiness of the soul unto which it pertains. As soon as ever therefore the Spirit of grace doth by such a spiritual and practical demonstration as hath been described, set forth God in Christ as the supreme and most unquestionable end and happiness of the soul, there are consequently suitable impressions upon the will, determining it unto operations conformable unto such a beautiful and glorious object, and enlarging it to run unto this centre, to renounce all other things, and to cleave only unto this.

And these acts upon the will are,

(1.) By preventing† grace, it is bent and excited unto heavenly objects, and unto the choice of such spiritual good things, the sovereign excellences whereof have been so sweetly represented. Good is the object of the will ; we cannot will evil under the notion of evil : and amongst good things, that which is by the practical judgment resolved to be best, and that by the teaching of God himself, who neither is

* Depart, deviate.

† Going before.

deceived, nor can deceive, is the object of the will's election: and thus God by his exciting grace worketh in us that every act whereby we choose Christ, and subscribe our name in the call of his soldiers and servants, answering the call of God by a most cheerful consent thereunto.

(2.) By assisting and co-operating grace, it is further enabled to put forth this good will into deed, and so to work towards its salvation, Isa. xxvi. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 10.

Lastly, by subsequent grace, it is carried on towards perfection, to finish what was begun, and so to proceed from the beginning of faith in vocation, to the end of faith in salvation, the Spirit of Christ working in us, as he himself did work for us, unto a consummation, saving to the uttermost those that come unto God by him, Phil. i. 6. 1 Pet. i. 9, 10. Eph. iv. 13. Heb. vii. 25.

And by this means the native obstinacy of the will both in and after conversion is subdued, so that it neither doth nor can overcome the grace of God working effectually with his word: 1. Because of the purpose of God, to show mercy where he will show mercy, which can in no wise be resisted. 2. Because of the power of God, in the effectual applying of that mercy unto the souls of men with admirable sweetness, with undeniable evidence, with ineffable persuasion, with omnipotent and invincible energy, which no hardness of heart is able to refuse, because the proper operation of it is to take away that hardness which would refuse it; and that by an act of equal power with that whereby Christ was raised from the dead, which all the world was not able to hinder or prevent, Eph. i. 19. Col. ii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 5. Thus we see, though we desire, and

endeavour, and purpose, and covenant conversion and amendment of life; yet the whole progress of conversion, our promises, our covenants, our abilities, our sufficiencies to make good any thing do all receive their stability from the grace of God.

From whence we learn, not to put confidence in our own studies, vows, purposes, promises of new obedience. Every man is a liar; no sooner left unto himself, but he becomes a miserable spectacle of weakness and mutability. Even Adam in innocency when he was to be supported and to persevere by his own strength, though he had no sin or inward corruption to betray him, how suddenly was he thrown down from his excellency by Satan with a poor and slender temptation! How strangely did a creature of so high and noble a constitution exchange God himself for the fruit of a tree! believe a serpent before a Maker! and was so miserably cheated as to suppose that by casting away God's image, he should become the more like him! Who could have thought that David, a man after God's own heart, with one mis-carrying glance of his eye should have been plunged into such a gulf of sin and misery as he fell into? that so spiritual and heavenly a soul should be so suddenly overcome with so sensual a temptation? that so merciful and righteous a man should so greatly wrong a faithful servant as he did Uriah, and then make the innocent blood of him whom he wronged, a mantle to palliate and to cover the wrong, and made use of his fidelity to convey the letters and instructions for his own ruin? Who could have thought that Lot, so soon after he had been delivered from fire and brimstone, and vexed with the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom, should be himself inflamed with unnatural, incestuous lust? Who could

have suspected that Peter, who had his name from a rock, should be so soon shaken like a reed, and after so solemn a protestation not to forsake Christ though all else should, to be driven with the voice of a maid from his stedfastness, and with oaths and curses to be the first that denied him? Surely every man in his best estate is altogether vanity!

Therefore it behoveth us to be always humbled in the sight of ourselves, and to be jealous of our original impotency unto the doing of any good, unto the forbearing of any evil, unto the repelling of any temptation by our own power: "In his own might shall no man be strong," 1 Sam. ii. 9. To be a sinner and to be without strength, are terms equivalent in the apostle, Rom. v. 6. 8. Nay even where there is a will to do good, there is a defect of power to perform it, Rom. vii. 18. our strength is not in ourselves, but in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and in the working of his Spirit, in our inner man, Eph. vi. 10. iii. 19. Phil. iv. 13. If but a good thought arise in our mind, or a good desire and motion be stirring in our heart, or a good word drop from our lips, we have great cause to take notice of the grace of God that offered it to us, and wrought it in us, and to wonder how any of the fruit of paradise could grow in so beathy a wilderness.

We ought likewise to be jealous of our natural antipathy and reluctancy unto holy duties; our aptness to draw back towards perdition; to refuse and thrust away the offers and motions of grace; our rebellion which ariseth from the law of the members against the law of the mind; the continual droppings of a corrupt heart upon any of the tender buds and sproutings of piety that are wrought within us, our aptness to be weary of the yoke, and to shake off the

•

burden of Christ from our shoulders, Isa. xliii. 22. our natural levity and inconstancy of spirit in any holy resolutions, continuing as a morning dew, which presently is dried up, beginning in the spirit, and ending in the flesh, having interchangeable fits of the one and the other; like the polypus, now of one colour, and anon of another; now hot with zeal, and anon cold with security; now following Moses with songs of thanksgiving for deliverance out of Egypt, and quickly after thrusting Moses away, and in heart returning unto Egypt again. Such a discomposedness and natural instability there is in the spirit of man, that, like strings in an instrument, it is apt to be altered with every change of weather; nay, while you are playing on it, you must ever and anon be new turning it; like water heated, which is always offering to reduce itself to its own coldness. No longer sun, no longer light; no longer Christ, no longer grace. If his back be at any time upon us, our back will immediately be turned from him; like those forgetful creatures in Seneca, who even while they are eating, if they happen to look aside from their meat, immediately lose the thoughts of it, and go about seeking for more.

And we ought also to be jealous of the manifold decays and abatements of the grace of God in us, our aptness to leave our first love, Rev. ii. 4. How did Hezekiah fall into an impolitic vain-glory, in showing all his treasures unto the ambassadors of a foreign prince, thereby kindling a desire in him to be master of so rich a land, as soon as God left him unto himself, 2 Kings xx. 12, 13. How quickly without continual husbandry will a garden or vineyard be wasted and overgrown with weeds! How easily is a ship when it is at the very shore, carried with a storm

back into the sea again ! How quickly will a curious watch, if it lie open, gather dust into the wheels, and be out of order ! Though therefore thou have found sweetness in religion, joy in the Holy Spirit, comfort, yea heaven in good duties, power against corruptions, strength against temptations, triumph over afflictions, assurance of God's favour, vigour, life, and great enlargement of heart in the ways of godliness ; yet for all this be not high-minded, but fear. Remember the flower that is wide open in the morning, when the sun shines upon it, may be shut up in the evening, before night come. If the sun had not stood still, Joshua had not taken vengeance on the enemy, Josh. x. 13. and if the Sun of righteousness do not constantly shine upon us and supply us, we shall not be able to pursue and carry on any victorious affections. While God openeth his hand thou art filled, but if he withdraw his face, thou wilt be troubled again, Psa. civ. 28, 29. Therefore take heed of resting on thine own wisdom or strength. Thou mayest after all this grieve the Spirit of God, and cause him to depart and hide himself from thee : thou mayest fall from thy stedfastness, and lose thy wonted comforts ; thou mayest have a dead winter upon the face of thy conscience, and be brought to such a sad and diseonsolate condition, as to conclude that God hath cast thee out of his sight, that he hath forgotten to be gracious, and hath shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure ; to roar out for anguish of spirit as one whose bones are broken ; thy soul may draw nigh to the grave, and thy life to the destroyers, and thou mayest find it a woful and a most insuperable difficulty to recover thy life and strength again. It was so with Job, chap. x. 16, 17. xiii. 26—28. xvi. 9. 13. xxx. 15. 31. It was so with David,

Psa. li. 8. lxxvii. 2—4. It was so with Heman, Psa. lxxxviii. and divers others. See Job xxxiii. 19. 22. Psa. x. 3. 11. Isa. liv. 6. 11. Jonah ii. 3, 4. Therefore we should still remember in a calm to provide for a storm; to stir up the graces of God continually in ourselves that they be not quenched, 2 Tim. i. 6. So to rejoice in the Lord, as withal to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Psa. ii. 11. Phil. ii. 12, 13. never to let the grace of God puff us up, or make us forgetful of our own weakness; but as the apostle saith of himself in regard of God's grace, "When I am weak, then am I strong," 2 Cor. xii. 10. so to say of ourselves in regard of our own natural corruption, When I am strong, then I am weak.

Again, this must not so humble us as to deject and dismay us, or make us give over the hope of holding out to the end, when our nature is so weak, our enemies so strong, our temptations so many: but we must withal be quickened by these considerations, with prayer to implore, and with faith to rely on and draw strength from the word and grace of God, to have always the window of the soul open towards the Sun of righteousness, whereby the supplies of his grace to prevent, excite, assist, follow, establish us, and carry on every good thing which he hath begun for us, may be continually admitted. This is one of the most necessary duties for a christian, to hold constant and fixed purposes in godliness: the scripture frequently calls upon us for them, that with purpose of heart we should cleave unto God, Acts xi. 23. That we should continue in the grace of God, Acts xiii. 43. That we would be rooted and grounded in love, Eph. iii. 17. that we would hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, Heb. x. 23.

that we would be stedfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58. that we would look to ourselves, that we may not lose the things which we have wrought, 2 John 8. that we would hold fast and keep the works of Christ unto the end, Rev. ii. 25, 26. and it is that which godly men are most earnestly solicitous about, and do strive unto with greatest importunity. "I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress," Psal. xvii. 3. "Unite my heart to fear thy name," Psal. lxxxvi. 11. "My heart is fixed O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise," Psal. lvii. 7. Therefore in this case it is necessary for us to draw nigh unto God, who only can ratify all our pious resolutions; who giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no power increaseth strength, Isa. xl. 29. who only can settle and stablish the hearts of men, 1 Pet. v. 10. The conscience of our duty, the sense of our frailty, the power, malice, and cunning of our enemies, the obligation of our covenant, should direct the soul perpetually unto God for the supply of his grace, that it may in all our weaknesses be sufficient for us, and hold us up that we may be safe, as the psalmist speaks, Psal. cxix. 117. and may never through infirmity or unstableness of spirit violate our own resolutions.

Further, this is a matter of great comfort unto the godly, that in the midst of so many temptations, snares, impediments, amongst which we walk, not only the safety of our souls, and security of our eternal salvation; but even our present condition in this life, our conversion, our obedience, all our pious purposes of heart, all the progress we make in a holy conversation; do not depend upon the weakness and uncertainty of a human will, but upon the infallible

truth, the constant promise, the immutable purpose, the invincible power, the free love, the absolute grace, the omnipotent wisdom and working of God, who doth whatsoever he pleaseth both in heaven and earth, and worketh all things by the counsel of his own will, "I the Lord change not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed," Mal. iii. 6. We poor and weak men change with every wind; strong to-day, and weak to-morrow; fixed and resolute to-day, shaken and staggering to-morrow; running forward to-day, and revolting as fast to-morrow; no hold to be taken of our promises, no trust to be given to our covenants. Like Peter on the water, we walk one step, and we sink another. All our comfort is this, our strength and standing is not founded in ourselves, but in the rock whereon we are built, and in the power of God, by which we are kept through faith unto salvation, out of whose hands none are able to pluck us; our very actions are wrought in us, and carried on unto their end by the power of Christ, who hath mercy, wisdom, and strength enough to rescue us, as from the power of hell and death, so from the danger of our own sickly and froward hearts. To see a man when he is half a mile from his enemy draw a sword to encounter him, or take up a stone to hit him, would be but a ridiculous spectacle: for what could he do with such weapons by his own strength at such a distance? But if he mount a cannon, and point that level against the enemy, this we do not wonder at, though the distance be so great: because though the action be originally his, yet the effect of it proceedeth from the force of the materials and instruments which he useth, to wit, the powder, the ball, the fire, the cannon. It seemed absurd in the eye of the enemy; for little David with a shepherd's bag, and a sling,

to go against Goliath, an armed giant: and it produced in his proud heart much disdain and insultation, 1 Sam. xvii. 41—43. But when we hear David mention the name of God, in the strength and confidence whereof he came against so proud an enemy, this makes us conclude weak David strong enough to encounter with great Goliath. It is not our own strength, but the love of God which is the foundation of our triumph over all enemies, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

But some will then say, Then we may be secure, if God's grace and power be our alone strength, then let us commit ourselves and our salvation unto him, and in the mean time give over all thoughts and care of it ourselves, and live as we list; no act of ours can frustrate the counsel of the love of God. To this we answer with the apostle, God forbid! Though the enemies of free grace do thus argue, yet they who indeed have the grace of God in their hearts, have better learned Christ. For it is against the formal nature of the grace and Spirit of Christ to suffer those in whom it dwelleth to give over themselves unto security and neglect of God; for grace is a vital and active principle, and doth so work in us, as that it doth withal dispose and direct us unto working too. The property of grace is to fight against, and to kill sin, as being most extremely contrary unto it; and therefore it is a most irrational way of arguing to argue from the being of grace to the life of sin. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Rom. vi. 2. If we be dead to sin, this is argument enough in the apostle's judgment, why we should set our affections on things above, Col. iii. 2, 3. The grace of God doth not only serve to bring salvation, but to teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this

present world, Tit. ii. 11, 12. He who hath decreed salvation as the end, hath decreed also all the antecedent means unto that end to be used in a manner suitable to the condition of reasonable and voluntary agents, unto whom it belongs, having their minds by grace enlightened, and their wills by grace prevented, to co-operate with the same grace in the further pursuance of their salvation. And if at any time corruption should in God's children abuse his grace and efficacy unto such presumptuous resolutions, they would quickly rue so unreasonable and carnal a way of arguing, by the woful sense of God's displeasure in withdrawing the comforts of his grace from them, which would make them ever after take heed how they turned the grace of God into wantonness any more. Certainly, the more the servants of God are assured of his assistance, the more careful they are in using it unto his own service. Who more sure of the grace of God than the apostle Paul, who gloried of it as that which made him what he was; "By the grace of God I am that I am;" who knew that God's grace was sufficient for him, and that nothing could separate him from the love of Christ? who knew whom he had believed, and that the grace of the Lord was exceedingly abundant towards him? and yet who more tender and fearful of sin? Who more set against corruption, more abundant in duty, more pressing unto perfection, than he? This is the nature of grace to animate and actuate the faculties of the soul in God's service, to ratify our covenants, and to enable us to perform them.

Again, as it is singular comfort to the servants of God, that their own wills and purposes are in God's keeping, and so they cannot ruin themselves: so it is also, that all other men's wills and resolutions are

in God's keeping too, so that they shall not be able to purpose or resolve on any evil against the church, without leave from him. So then when the rage and passions of men break out, tribe divided against tribe, brother against brother, father against child, head against body; when the band of unity, which was wont to knit together this flourishing kingdom, is broken like the prophet's staff, and therewithal the beauty of the nation miserably withered and decayed, (for these two go still together, Beauty and Bands, Zech. xi. 10. 14.) we must look on all this as God's own work. It was he who sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, for the mutual punishment of the sins of one another. It was he who turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his people, and to deal subtilly with them, Psa. cv. 25. He sent the Assyrian against his people, giving them a charge to take the spoil and the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets, Isa. x. 6. He appointed the sword of the king of Babylon, by his overruling direction, to go against Judah, and not against the Ammonites, Ezek. xxi. 19. He by the secret command of his providence marked some for safety, and gave commission to kill and slay others, Ezek. ix. 4, 5. It is he who giveth Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers, and poureth out upon them the strength of battle, Isa. xlii. 24, 25. If there be evil in a city, in a kingdom, the Lord hath done it, Amos iii. 6. Isa. xlv. 7. This consideration is very useful both to humble us, when we consider that God hath a controversy against the land, and that it is he whom we have to do with in these sad commotions that are in the kingdoms; and to quiet and silence us, that we may not dare to murmur at the course of his wise and righteous proceedings with us: and to

direct us with prayer, faith, and patience to implore, and in his good time to expect such an issue and close, as we are sure shall be for his own glory, and for the manifestation of his mercy towards his people, and his justice towards all that are implacable enemies unto Sion.

In the troubles of the church, this is matter of singular comfort, that however enemies may say, this and that we will do, hither and thither we will go, though they may combine together and be mutually confederate, *Psa. lxxxiii. 2. 5.* and gird themselves, and take counsel, and speak the word, yet in all this God hath the casting voice. There is little heed to be given unto what Ephraim saith, except God say the same: without him whatsoever is counselled shall come to nought; whatsoever is decreed or spoken, shall not stand, *Isa. viii. 9, 10.* We have a lively description of the swift, confident, and furious march of the great host of Sennacherib towards Jerusalem, with the great terrors and consternation of the inhabitants in every place where they came, weeping, flying, removing their habitations, *Isa. x. 28—31.* and when he is advanced unto Nob, from which place the city Jerusalem might be seen, he there shook his hand against Jerusalem, threatening what he would do unto it. And then when the waters were come to the very neck, and the Assyrian was in the height of pride and fury, God sent forth a prohibition against all their resolutions, and that huge army which was, for pride and number, like the thick trees of Lebanon, were suddenly cut down by the mighty one, to wit, by the angel of the Lord, *ver. 33, 34.* compared with *Ezek. xxxi. 3. 10. Isa. xvii. 12—14. xxxvii. 36.* Therefore,

Our greatest business is to apply ourselves to God,

v

who alone is the Lord that healeth us, who alone can join the two sticks of Ephraim and Judah, and make them one, Exod. xv. 26. Ezek. xxxvii. 19. that he would still the raging of the sea, and command a calm again. He can say, Ephraim shall say thus and thus; he hath the hearts of kings, and consequently of all other men in his hands, Prov. xxi. 1. and he can turn them as rivers of water, which way soever he will, as men by art can derive waters and divert them from one course to another (as they did in the siege of Babylon) as historians tell us, whereunto the scripture seemeth to refer, Isa. xliii. 15, 16. xliv. 23. 28. Jer 1. 23. li. 36. he can sway, alter, divert, overrule the purposes of men as it pleaseth him, reconciling lambs and lions unto one another, Isa. xi. 6. making Israel, Egypt, and Assyria agree together, Isa. xix. 24, 25. he can say to Balaam, Bless, when his mind was to curse, Josh. xxiv. 10. he can turn the wrath of Laban into a covenant of kindness with Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 24. 44. and when Esau had advantage to execute his threats against his brother, he can then turn resolutions of cruelty into kisses, Gen. xxxiii. 4. and when Saul hath compassed David and his men round about; and is most likely to take them, he can even then take him off by a necessary diversion, 1 Sam. xxiii. 26—28. This is the comfort of God's people, that whatever men say, except God say it too, it shall come all to nothing. He can restrain the wrath of men whensoever it pleaseth him, and he will do it when it hath proceeded so far as to glorify his power, and to make way for the more notable manifestation of his goodness to his people, Psal. lxxvi. 10. And thus far of God's answer to the covenant of Ephraim. They promised to renounce idols, and here God promiseth that they should renounce them.

Now there are two things more to be observed from this expression, "What have I to do any more with idols?" 1. That in true conversion God maketh our special sin to be the object of our greatest detestation, which point hath been opened before. 2. From those words "any more," that the nature of true repentance is to break sin off, as the expression is, Dan. iv. 27. and not to suffer a man to continue any longer in it, Rom. vi. 1, 2. It makes a man esteem the time past sufficient to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, 1 Pet. iv. 2, 3. and is exceeding thrifty of the time to come, so to redeem it, as that God may have all; doth not linger, nor delay, nor make objections, or stick at inconveniences, or raise doubts whether it be seasonable to go out of Egypt and Sodom or not. It is not at the sluggard's language, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber:" nor at Agrippa's language, "Almost thou persuadest me:" nor at Felix's language, "When I have a convenient season I will send for thee;" but immediately resolves with Paul not to confer with flesh and blood, Gal. i. 16. and makes haste to fly from the wrath to come, while it is yet to come, before it overtakes us, Luke iii. 7. Doth not make anxious or cavilling questions, What shall I do for the hundred talents? How shall I maintain my life, my credit, my family? how shall I keep my friends? how shall I preserve my interests, or support my estate? but ventures the loss of all for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Matt. xiii. 46. Phil. iii. 7, 8. is contented to part with a sky full of stars for one Sun of righteousness. The converts that return to Christ, come like dromedaries, like doves, like ships; no wings, no sails can carry them fast enough from their former courses unto him, Isa. lx. 6—9. Abraham is up betimes in the

morning, though it be to the sacrificing of a son, Gen. xii. 3. David makes haste and delays not when he is to keep God's commandments, Psa. cxix. 60. When Christ called his disciples, immediately they left their nets, their ship, their father, and followed him, Matt. iv. 20. 22. This is the mighty power of repentance; it doth not give dilatory answers, it doth not say to Christ, Go away now, and come to-morrow, then I will hear thee; I am not yet old enough, or rich enough, I have not yet obtained pleasure, or honour, or profit, or preferment enough by my sins; but presently it hears and entertains him. I have sinned enough already to condemn, to shame, to slay me; I have spent time and strength enough already upon it, for such miserable wages as shame and death come to; therefore I will never any more have to do with it. This is the sweet and most ingenious voice of repentance. "The thing which I see not, teach me, and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more," Job xxxiv. 32. There is no sin more contrary to repentance than apostacy: for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, which the soul never finds reason to repent of, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. "Let us therefore take heed of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God," Heb. iii. 12. and of drawing back unto perdition, Heb. x. 39. of dismissing our sins, as the Jews did their servants, Jer. xxxiv. 16 and calling them back again: for Satan usually returns with seven more wicked spirits, and maketh the last state of such a man worse than the first, Luke xi. 26. Ground which hath been a long time laid down from tillage unto pasture, if afterwards it be newly broken, will bring a much greater crop of corn, than it did formerly when it was a common field, and so the heart which hath been taken

off from sin, if it return to it again, will be much more fruitful than before. As lean bodies have many times the strongest appetite, so lust when it hath been kept lean, returns with greater hunger unto those objects which feed it. A stream which hath been stopped, will run more violently being once opened again. Therefore in repentance we must shake hands with sin for ever, and resolve never more to tamper with it.

Now in that the Lord saith, "I have heard him and observed him;" we learn hence,

1. That God heareth and answereth the prayers only of penitents. When a man resolves, I will have no more to do with sin, then, not till then, doth his prayer find way to God. Impenitency clogs the wing of devotion, and stops its passage unto heaven. The person must be accepted before the petition; Christ Jesus is the priest that offereth, and the altar which sanctifieth all our services, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Isa. lvi. 7. And Christ will not be their Advocate in heaven, who refuse to have him their King on earth. The scripture is in no point more express than in this. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," Psa. lxvi. 18. Prayer is a pouring out of the heart, if iniquity be harboured there, prayer is obstructed, and if it do break out, it will have the scent and savour of that iniquity upon it. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 8. both because it is impure in itself, and because it hath no altar to sanctify it. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination," Prov. xxviii. 9. Great reason that God should refuse to hear him who refuseth to hear God; that he who will not let God beseech him, (as he doth in his word, 2 Cor. v. 20.)

should not be allowed to beseech God, Prov. i. 24. 28. Isa. i. 15. His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, but iniquity separates between us and him, and hides his face that he will not hear, Isa. lix. 1, 2. Ezek. viii. 18. God heareth not sinners, John ix. 31. the prevalency of prayer is this, that it is the prayer of a righteous man, Jam. v. 16. and indeed no wicked man can pray in the true and proper notion of prayer. It is true, there is a kind of prayer of nature, when men cry in their distress unto the God and author of nature, for such good things as nature feeleth the want of, which God in the way of his general providence and common mercies is sometimes pleased to answer suitably to the natural desires of those who ask them. But the prayer of faith (which is the true notion of prayer, Rom. x. 14. Jam. i. 15.) goes not to God as the author of nature, but as the God of grace, and the Father of Christ, and doth not put up mere natural, but spiritual requests unto him as to a heavenly Father, which requests proceed from the Spirit of grace and supplication, teaching us to pray as we ought, Zech. xii. 10. Rom. viii. 26, 27. Gal. iv. 6. So that they who have not the spirit of Christ enabling them to cry, Abba, Father, are not able to pray a prayer of faith. Prayer hath two wills concurring in it whenever it is right, our will put forth in desires, and God's will respected as the rule of those desires: for we are not allowed to desire what we will ourselves of God, but we must ask according to his will, 1 John v. 14. Now whensoever impenitent sinners pray for spiritual things, they do ever pray contrary to one of these two wills: when they pray for mercy and pardon, they pray against God's will, for that which God will not give: for mercy is proposed to, and provided for, those that forsake sin,

Prov. xxviii. 13. he who chooseth to hold fast sin, doth by his own election forsake mercy: for the goodness of God leads to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. God's mercy is a holy mercy, it will pardon sin forsaken, but it will not protect sin retained. Again, when they pray for grace, they pray against their own will, for that which they themselves would not have. It is impossible that a man should formerly will the holding fast and continuing in sin, (as every impenitent man doth,) and with the same will should truly desire the receiving of grace, which is destructive to the continuance of sin: and if a wicked man do truly will the grace of God when he prays for it, why doth he refuse the same grace when he heareth it in the ministry of the word offered unto him? If God offer it, and he desire it, how comes it not to be received? Certainly there is not any thing in the corrupt heart of man by nature which can willingly close with any sanctifying grace of the spirit of Christ. Self-denial is a concomitant in all acts of grace, and self-seeking in all acts of lust; and therefore where there is nothing but lust, there can be no real volition of grace which is so contrary unto it.

This teacheth us to have penitent resolutions, and spiritual aims in all our prayers, if we would have them prevail at the throne of grace. We are now suffering under heavy calamities: and very desirous we are that they should be removed; we suffer, and languish, and fret, and pine away, and we complain every where of want, and violence. But who set themselves to cry mightily to God, and call upon their soul as the mariners upon Jonah, "O thou sleeper, what meanest thou, arise, call upon God?" Haply we go so far, we pray too, and yet receive no answer, because we ask amiss, Jam. iv. 1—3. we are troubled

that our lusts are abridged of their fuel, or that our nature is deprived of her necessities, and for these things we pray. But till our troubles bring us to seek God more than ourselves, make us more sensible of his wrath than of our own wants ; more displeased at what offends him, than at what pincheth and oppresseth ourselves ; we cannot promise ourselves an answer of peace. The mariners cried, and the tempest continued still ; Jonah was to be cast over ; so long as there was a fugitive from God in the ship, the storm would not cease. Never can we promise ourselves any comfortable fruit of our prayers, till the aim of them is spiritual, that God may be honoured, that his church may be cleansed and reformed, that our lives may be amended, that whatsoever forsakes God in us may be cast away. Till God's whole work be performed upon mount Sion and upon Jerusalem, we cannot promise ourselves that he will call in his commission and charge to take the spoil and the prey, Isa. x. 12. And therefore our greatest wisdom is to consider what God calls for, to make it our prayer and endeavour that his will and counsel may be fulfilled ; the more we make God our end, the sooner we shall recover our peace again.

2. We learn that our performance of duty, doth depend much upon God's hearing and answering of prayer. Ephraim will have no more to do with idols, because God hath heard him. Prayer is the key of obedience, and the introduction unto duty. The principles of duties are, wisdom to know and order them ; will to desire and intend them ; strength to perform and persevere in the doing of them : and all these are the product of prayer. " If any want wisdom, let him ask it of God," Jam. i. 5. so Solomon did, 1 Kings iii. 9. " And who am I, and what is

my people," saith David, "that we should be able to offer so willingly? for all things come of thee," 1 Chron. xxix. 14. and the apostle prays for the Ephesians, that God would grant them to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inward man, Eph. iii. 16. the principles of duty are the fruits of prayer, and therefore the performance of duty doth much depend on the hearing and answering of prayer.

3. We learn from God's observing, or having a careful and vigilant eye upon Ephraim, that when we renounce all carnal and sinful confidence, and cast ourselves wholly upon God, engaging his eye of favour and providence unto us, this will be a most sufficient protection against all the cruelties of men. One would think when we hear a sword threatened, dashing of infants, murder of women, the prophet should have called on them to take unto them weapons to make resistance, (and certainly the use of means in such cases is necessary; the sword of the Lord doth not exclude the sword of Gideon.) One would think, "Take to you words," were but a poor preparation against a destroying enemy: yet this is all that the prophet insists on; when the Assyrian comes against you, do you take with you words; your lips shall be able to defend more than his armies can annoy. Words uttered from a penitent heart, in time of trouble, unto God, are stronger than all the preparations of flesh and blood, because the way that prayer and repentance go, that way God goeth too. Amalek fights, and Moses speaks unto God in the behalf of Israel, and the lifting up of his hands prevails more than the strength of Israel besides, Exod. xvii. 11, 12. One man of God who knows how to manage the cause of Israel with him, is the chariots and horsemen of Israel, 2 Kings ii. 12. What huge armies did Asa

and Jehoshaphat vanquish by the power of prayer 2 Chron. xiv. 11. xx. 22. 25. Till God forbid prayer as he did to Jeremiah, chap. vii. 16. xi. 14. and take off the hearts of his servants from crying unto him in behalf of a people, we have reason to hope that he will at last think thoughts of mercy towards them, Exod. xxxii. 10. 14. and in the mean time when they are reduced to the condition of fatherless children, he will be a guardian unto them ; his eye of providence and tuition will observe them, and take care of them ; He is the Father of the fatherless, and Judge of the widow, even God in his holy habitation, Psal. lxxviii. 5.

Now in that he saith, " I am a green fir-tree," it is a promise made in opposition to all the vain succours which they relied on before, intimating that instead of them he would be their defence and shelter, that they should not need to hide themselves under such narrow refuges. Whatsoever human wisdom, wealth, power, or other outward means men have to defend themselves withal, yet they shall never find any true and solid protection but in and from God after sound conversion unto him. The fir-tree, Pliny saith, casteth not its leaves, and so yields a perpetual shade both in winter and in summer. To note that sound conversion yieldeth comfort in all conditions of life. " Though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea," &c. Psal. xli. 2, 3. Hab. iii. 17—19. " However it be, God is good to Israel, and it shall go well with the righteous ; he will be for a sanctuary to his people, that they need not be afraid," Isa. viii. 12—14. If you would have your hearts above all the troubles of the world, get under this fir-tree, cast yourselves under this protection, get into the chamber of God's providence and

promises, and then though the troubles of the world may strip you of all outward comforts, yet God will be all unto you.

Lastly, in that he saith, "From me is thy fruit found:" we learn, that though good works be ours when they are done by us, yet they come from God who enableth us to do them; we bear them, but God worketh and produceth them in us: the duty is ours, but the efficacy and blessing is his. This falleth in with what hath been handled in the first doctrine; and therefore I shall say no more of it.

SERMON VII.

WHO IS WISE, AND HE SHALL UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS .
PRUDENT, AND HE SHALL KNOW THEM? FOR THE WAYS OF
THE LORD ARE RIGHT, AND THE JUST SHALL WALK IN THEM :
BUT THE TRANSGRESSORS SHALL FALL THEREIN.—HOSEA
XIV. 9.

THESE words are a most pathetic close, and, as it were, a seal which the prophet setteth to all the doctrine of his whole book, and to the course of his ministry; implying, 1. A strong asseveration of the truth of all those things which he had in the name of God delivered unto them. 2. An elegant and forcible excitation of the people unto a sad and serious pondering of them, laying to heart the sins therein charged, the duties therein required, the judgments therein threatened, the blessings therein promised. And withal, 3. A tacit complaint of the paucity of those who were wise unto salvation, and of the desperate use which wicked men make of the word of God, and the ministry of his grace; namely, to stumble at it, and to turn it unto themselves into an occasion of ruin.

“Who is wise, and he shall understand?” &c. The interrogation is, 1. A secret exprobaton of folly unto his hearers, or the greatest part of them: for so this kind of interrogation doth frequently in scripture intimate either a negation, or at least the rareness, and difficulty of the thing spoken of; as, “Who hath known the mind of the Lord?” 1 Cor. ii. 16. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?”

Rom. viii. 33. These are negatives. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" Psa. xc. 11. "Who amongst you will give ear to this?" Isa. xlii. 23. "Who hath believed our report? or to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isa. liii. 1. These are restrictives. Who? that is, few or none are such. 2. An earnest wish and desire of the prophet. O that men were wise to understand these things, and lay them to heart: as, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" that is, O that I were delivered: Rom. vii. 24. "Who will show us any good?" Psa. iv. 6. that is, O that any could do it. 3. A strong affirmation or demonstration wherein true wisdom doth indeed consist, and what men that are truly wise will do, when the ways of God are by the ministry of his servants set forth before them; namely, ponder and consider the great weight and consequence of them, as Jer. ix. 12, 13. "Who is the wise man that may understand this?" namely, as it followeth, for what the land perisheth, and is burnt up like a wilderness that none passeth through? And the Lord saith, "Because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them," &c. This is the character of a wise man, to resolve the judgments that are upon a people, into their proper original, and not to allege that there is no cause for them. 4. A vehement awakening and quickening of the people unto this duty of sad attendance on the words which he had spoken unto them, as Exod. xxxii. 26. "Who is on the Lord's side?" Let him come unto me. And 2 Kings ix. 32. "Who is on my side?" Who? So it is, as if the prophet should have said, there are none of you who have been my hearers, but would willingly retain the reputation of wise and understanding men, and would esteem it a high indignity to be

recorded unto all ages for fools and madmen. Well, I have preached amongst you many years together (sixty are the fewest that we can well compute, some say seventy, others above eighty) but alas, what entertainment hath mine embassy received? What operation or success hath it had amongst you? Are there not the calves still standing at Dan and Bethel? Do not carnal policies prevail still against the express will of God? O if there be any wise, any prudent men amongst you, (and O that all God's people were such,) let them, now at length in the close of my ministry towards them, show their wisdom, by giving heed to what I have declared from the Lord, that they may learn to walk in God's righteous ways, and may not stumble and perish by them.

Here are two words used to express the wisdom which God requireth in those who would fruitfully hear his word; the one importing a mental knowledge of the things, and the other a practical and prudential judgment in pondering them, and in discerning the great moment and consequence of them unto our eternal weal or wo. So the apostle prays for the Colossians, that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, Col. i. 9. In mere notional things which are only to be known for themselves, and are not further reducible unto use and practice, it is sufficient that a man knows them. But in such things the knowledge whereof is ever in order unto a further end, there is required besides the knowledge itself, a faculty of wisdom and judgment to apply and manage that knowledge respectively to that end, and for the advancement of it. Now we know that theological learning is all of it practical, and hath an intrinsical respect and order unto worship and obedience; there-

fore it is called the knowledge of the truth which is after godliness, Tit. i. 1. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that do his commandments," Psa. cxi. 10. Keep his judgments and do them, for this is your wisdom and understanding, Deut. iv. 6. therefore, besides the bare knowledge of the truth, there is required wisdom, and spiritual understanding to direct that knowledge unto those holy uses and saving ends for which it was intended.

The doubling of the sentence, it is the augmenting of the sense, to note, that it is the supreme and most excellent act of wisdom and prudence so to know the word and ways of God, as with a practical judgment to ponder them in order to salvation.

By the ways of the Lord we are to understand :

1. The ways of his judgments, and of his wonderful providence towards men : which however to the proud and contentious spirit of the wicked they may seem perverse and inordinate, and are to the eye of all men unsearchable ; are yet by spiritual wisdom acknowledged to be most righteous and holy, to have no crookedness or disorder in them, but to be carried on in an even and straight way unto the ends whereunto his holy counsel doth direct them. "His works are perfect, and all his ways are judgment," Deut. xxxii. 4. When Jeremiah had a mind to plead with the Lord concerning his judgments, yet he promiseth this as a matter unquestionable, that God was righteous in them all, Jer. xii. 1.

2. The ways of his will, word, and worship ; so the word is often taken in scripture to signify the doctrine which men teach, as Matt. xxii. 16. Acts xiii. 10. xviii. 25. xxii. 4. and damnable heresies are called pernicious ways, in opposition to the way of

truth, 2 Pet. ii. 2. and the rites or rules of corrupt worship are called by the prophet the way of Beersheba, Amos viii. 14. And these ways of God are likewise very straight, which carry men on in a sure line unto a happy end, Psa. xix. 8. whereas wicked ways have crookedness and perverseness in them, Psa. cxxv. 5. and this way seems here chiefly to be meant, because it follows, "The just will walk in them," that is, they will so ponder and judge of the righteous ways of God in his word, as to make choice of them for their way of happiness wherein they intend to walk, as the psalmist speaks, "I have chosen the way of thy truth," Psa. cxix. 30. xxv. 12. Whereas wicked men being offended at the purity of divine truth, do stumble and fall into perdition, as the Chaldee paraphrast expresseth this place.

The words are a powerful and pathetic stirring up of the people of Israel unto the consideration and obedience of the doctrines taught by the prophet in his whole prophecy. The arguments which he useth, are drawn, 1. From the character of the persons: "Who is wise, he shall understand," &c. 2. From the nature of the doctrine taught: "For the ways of the Lord are right." 3. From a double use and fruit of it made by different sorts of men. To the just, it is a way of happiness, they will walk; to the wicked, it is an occasion of stumbling, they will fall therein.

Touching the persons, we observe two things; the one intimated, their *paucity*; the other expressed, their *prudence*.

From the former consideration we may note—That there are few men who are wise unto salvation, and who do seriously attend and manage the ministry of the word unto that end. If there be any kind of

accidental enticement to allure the fancies, or curiosities, or customary attendances of men on the ordinances; elegance in the speaker, novelty and quaintness in the matter, credit or advantage in the duty; upon such inducements many will wait on the word; some to hear a sweet song, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. others to hear some new doctrine, Acts xvii. 19. some for loaves; to promote their secular advantages, John vi. 26. having one and the self-same reason of following Christ, which the Gadarenes had when they entreated him to depart from their coasts. But very few there are who do it on its own account, and with respect to the primary use and intention of it. Our prophet seems to do as the philosopher did, who lighted a candle at noon to find out a wise man indeed, to run to and fro through the streets, and in the broad places, to find a man that seeketh the truth, as the Lord commanded the prophet Jeremiah, Jer. v. 1. How doth the most elegant of all the prophets complain, "Who hath believed our report?" Isa. liii. 1. xlix. 4. How doth the most learned of the apostles complain, that the preaching of the gospel was esteemed foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to a whole world of men, and yet but eight persons were saved from the flood, and some of them rather for the family's sake than their own, 1 Pet. iii. 20. Paul preached to a whole academy at Athens, and but a very few were converted, Acts xvii. 34. some disputed, and others mocked, but few believed the things which they were not able to gainsay. Hezekiah sent messengers into all Israel to invite them unto the true worship of God at Jerusalem, but they were mocked and laughed to scorn, and a remnant only humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem, 2 Chron. xxx. 10, 11. (whereunto

the prophet seemeth to allude, Isa. xvii. 6. xxiv. 13.) Though a gun be discharged at a whole flight of birds, there are but few killed. Though the net be spread over the whole pond, but few fishes are taken ; many thrust their heads into the mud, and the net passeth over them ; and so most hearers do busy their heads with their own sensual or worldly thoughts, and so escape the power of the word. In the richest mine that is, there is much more earth and dross digged out than pure metal. Christ's flock in every place is but a little flock, Luke xii. 32. Few chosen, Matt. xx. 16. few saved, Luke xiii. 23. few that find the narrow way, which leadeth unto life, Matt. vii. 13, 14. The basest creatures are usually the most numerous, as flies and vermin ; those that are more noble, are more rare too. The people of the God of Abraham are in the scripture style, princes and nobles, Psa. xlvii. 9. Acts xvii. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 9. and how few are such kind of men in comparison with the vulgar sort ? They are indeed many in themselves, Heb. ii. 10. Rev. vii. 9. but very few and thin, being compared with the rest of the world.

We must therefore learn not to be offended or discouraged by the paucity of sincere professors, no more than we are in a civil state by the paucity of wise counsellors and politicians, in comparison with the common people. It is no strange thing at all in any societies of men to see the weaker part more than the wiser. If but few attend the right ways of the Lord, and walk in them, remember it is a work of wisdom, and such wisdom as cometh from above, and hath no seeds or principles in corrupt nature out of which it might be drawn ; nay, against which all the vigour of carnal reason doth exalt itself ; so that the more natural wisdom men have the more in danger

they are to despise and undervalue the ways of God, as being better able to reason and to cavil against them, Matt. xi. 25. Acts iv. 11. John vii. 48. 1 Cor. i. 28. ii. 8. 2 Cor. x. 5, 6. Therefore, 1. In the ministry of the word we must continue our labour, though Israel be not gathered, Isa. xlix. 4, 5. We must stretch out our hands, though it be to a disobedient and gainsaying people, Isa. xlix. 4, 5. whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we must speak unto them, be they ever so rebellious, Ezek. ii. 7. and the reason is, because the word is never in vain, but it doth ever prosper in the work whereunto God sends it, Isa. lv. 11. If men be righteous, they walk; if wicked, they stumble, and in both there is a sweet savour unto God, 2 Cor. ii. 15. God's work is accomplished, his glory promoted, the power of his gospel commended in the one and the other, as the virtue of a sweet savour is seen as well by the antipathy which one creature hath unto it, as by the refreshment which another receiveth from it: the strength of a rock, as by holding up the house that is built upon it, so by breaking in pieces the ship that doth dash against it; the force of the fire, as well by consuming the dross, as by refining the gold: the power of water, as well in sinking the ship that leaks, as in supporting the ship that is sound. The pillar of the cloud was as wonderful in the darkness which it cast upon the Egyptians, as in the light which it gave unto the Israelites, Exod. xiv. 20. The power of the angel as great in striking terror into the soldiers, as in speaking comfort unto the woman, Matt. xxviii. 4, 5. 2. In attendance on the word; we must resolve rather to walk with the wise, though few, than to follow a multitude to do evil, and to stumble with the wicked, though they be many: rather enter

the ark with a few, than venture the flood with a world of sinners: rather go three or four out of Sodom, than be burnt for company. We must not affect a humorous singularity in differing unnecessarily from good men, being one for Paul against Apollos, another for Apollos against Cephas; but we must ever affect a holy and pious singularity in walking contrary unto evil men, in shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, Phil. ii. 15. For the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, Prov. xii. 26. Though there be but few in the way, there will be many in the end of the journey. As the tribes and families went up divided towards Jerusalem, but when they were come thither they appeared every one of them before God in Sion, Psa. viii. 4. 7.

The prophet calleth upon his hearers to attend unto his doctrine by this argument, because it will be an evidence of their *prudence* and wisdom; we learn, That true and solid wisdom doth draw the heart to know aright, namely, to consider and ponder the judgments, blessings, ways, and word of God in order to the chief ends, and accordingly to direct all their conversation: for in God's account that knowledge which doth not edify, is no knowledge at all, 1 Cor. viii. 2. None are his wise men who are not wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. who do not draw their wisdom from his word, and from his commandments, Psa. xix. 7. cxix. 98, 99. Jer. viii. 9.

There is a twofold wisdom: wisdom in some particulars, as we esteem every man who is excellent in his profession, to be a wise man, so far as concerns the managing of that profession: as when a man knows all the necessary principles and maxims of that way wherein he is, the right ends whereof, and

the proper conclusions deducible from those principles, and tending unto those ends. And next, wisdom in general and in perfection, which is of those principles, ends, and conclusions which are universally and most transcendently necessary unto a man's chief and most general good: and this the philosopher calleth the knowledge of the most excellent and honourable things, or of the last end, and chief good of man. Now the end by how much the more supreme, perpetual, and ultimate it is, by so much the more it hath of excellency and goodness in it, as bearing thereby most exact proportion and conveniency to the soul of man; for the soul being immortal itself can have no final satisfaction from any good which is mortal and perishable: and being withal so large and unlimited, as that the reasonings and desires thereof extend unto the whole latitude of goodness, being not restrained unto this or that kind, but capable of desiring and judging of all the different degrees of goodness which are in all the whole variety of things, it can therefore never finally acquiesce in any but the most universal and comprehensive goodness, in the nearer or more remote participation whereof consisteth the different goodness of all other things.

This supreme and absolute goodness can indeed be but one, all other things being good by the participation of that. There is none good but one, that is God, Matt. xix. 17. But because there are two sorts of men in the world, righteous and wicked, the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent: therefore, consequently, there are two sorts of ends, which these men do differently pursue. The end of wicked men is a happiness which they out of their own corrupt judgments do shape themselves, and unto which they

do finally carry all the motions of their souls, called in scripture, "the pleasures of sin," and "the wages of iniquity," Heb. xi. 25. 2 Pet. ii. 15. that thing whatsoever it is, for obtaining whereof men do direct all their other endeavours, as profit, pleasure, and honour or power, and there are mediums exactly proportionable unto these ends ; namely, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16. And there is a wisdom consonant unto these ends and means, and fit to direct and manage these lusts, unto the attaining of those ends ; which therefore the apostle calleth the wisdom of the flesh or corrupt nature, Rom. viii. 7. and St. James, a wisdom earthly, sensual, and devilish, James iii. 15. earthly, managing the lusts of the eyes unto the ends of gain ; sensual, managing the lusts of the flesh unto ends of pleasure ; and devilish, managing the pride of life unto ends of power. But such wisdom as this, God esteems very foolishness ; My people are foolish, sottish children, they have no understanding ; Why ? "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge," Jer. iv. 22. Wisdom is only unto that which is good ; he is the wisest man who is simple and ignorant in the trade of evil, Rom. xvi. 19. "If any man amongst you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise," 1 Cor. iii. 18.

On the other side, the true and ultimate end of a righteous man, is Almighty God as most glorious in himself, as most good unto us ; or the seeking of his glory, that he may be honoured by us : and of our own salvation ; that we may be glorified by him. The fruition of him as the highest and first, and the greatest and last, the chiefest object for the mind to rest in by knowledge, and the heart by love : this

must needs be the best of all ends, both in regard of the excellency of it, as being infinitely and most absolutely good ; and in regard of eternity, so that the soul having once the possession of it, can never be to seek of that happiness which floweth from it, John vi. 27. The proper means for the obtaining of this end, is the knowledge of God in Christ, as in his word he hath revealed himself, to be known, worshipped, and obeyed ; for there only doth he teach us the way unto himself : and true wisdom is the pursuing of this means in order unto that end. For though many approaches may be made towards God by the search and contemplation of the creature, yet in his word he hath showed us a more full and excellent way, which only can make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. iii. 15. Prov. ix. 10. Eccl. xii. 12, 13. Jer. ix. 23, 24.

All the thoughts and wisdom of men are spent upon one of these two heads, either the obtaining of the good which we want, or the avoiding and declining the evil which we fear. And by how much the more excellent and difficult the good is which we want, and by how much the more pernicious and imminent the evil is which we fear, by so much greater is the wisdom which in both these procures the end at which we aim. Now then what are the most excellent good things which we want? Food is common to us with other creatures ; raiment, houses, lands, possessions, common to us with the worst men : take the most admired perfections which are not heavenly, and we may find very wicked men excel in them. All men will confess the soul to be more excellent than the body, and therefore the good of that to be more excellent than of the other : and the chief good of it to be that which doth most advance it towards the

Fountain of goodness, where is fulness of perfection, and perpetuity of fruition, The excellency of every thing standeth in two things. The perfection of beauty wherein it was made, and the perfection of use for which it was made. The beauty of man, especially in his soul, consists in this, that he was made like to God, after his image, Gen. i. 26, 27. and his end and use in this, that he was made for God, first to serve him, and after to enjoy him; for the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself, Psa. iv. 8. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise," Isa. xliii. 21. Therefore to recover the image of God, which is in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24. to work to the service and glory of God, John xv. 8. to aspire and to enjoy the possession and fruition of God, Exod. xxxiii. 18. Phil. i. 23. must needs be man's greatest good; and by consequence, to attend on the means hereof, must needs be his greatest wisdom.

What is the most pernicious and destructive evil which a man is in danger of? not the loss of any outward good things whatsoever, for they are all in their nature perishable; we enjoy them upon these conditions to part with them again; no wisdom can keep them; "Meat for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them," 1 Cor. vi. 13. Not the suffering of any outward troubles, which the best of men have suffered, and triumphed over; but the greatest loss is, the loss of a precious soul, which is more worth than all the world, Matt. xvi. 26. and the greatest suffering is the wrath of God upon the conscience, Psa. xc. 11. Isa. xxxiii. 14. Heb. x. 31. Matt. x. 28. Therefore to avoid this danger, and to snatch this darling from the paw of

the lion, is of all others the greatest wisdom. It is wisdom to deliver a city, Ecc. ix. 15. much more to deliver a soul, Prov. xi. 30. Angelical, seraphical knowledge without this is all worth nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

Therefore we should learn to show ourselves wise indeed by attendance on God's word. If the most glorious creatures for wisdom and knowledge that ever God made, the blessed angels, were employed in publishing the law of God, Acts vii. 53. Gal. iii. 19. and did with great admiration look into the mysteries of the gospel, and stoop down with their faces towards the mercy-seat, 1 Pet. i. 12. Eph. iii. 10. Exod. xxxvii. 9. it cannot but be also our chief wisdom to hide the word in our hearts, and to make it our companion and counsellor, as David did, Psa. cxix. 24. We esteem him the wisest man who followeth the best and safest counsel, and that which will most preserve and promote his interest, his honour, and his conscience. Herein was Rehoboam's weakness, that by passionate and rash counsels he suffered his honour to be stained, his interest to be weakened, and his conscience to be defiled with resolutions of violence and injustice. Now there is no counsel equal to that of God's word. It enlighteneth the eyes, it maketh wise the simple, Psa. xix. 7, 8. It is able to make a man wise for himself, and unto salvation, which no other counsel can do, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. There is no case that can be put, though of ever so great intricacy and perplexity, no doubt so difficult, no temptation so knotty and involved, no condition whereinto a man can be brought so desperate, no employment so dark and uncouth, no service so arduous, or full of discouragements, in all which, so far as respecteth conscience and salvation, there are

not most clear and satisfactory expedients to be drawn out of God's word, if a man have his judgment and senses after a spiritual manner exercised in the searching of it. That we are so often at a stand how to state such a question, how to satisfy such a scruple, how to clear and expedite such a difficulty, how to repel such a temptation, how to manage such an action, how to order our ways with an even and composed spirit in the various conditions whereinto we are cast in this world, doth not arise from any defect in the word of God, which is perfect and able to furnish us unto every good work, but only from our own ignorance and unacquaintance with it, who know not how to draw the general rule, and to apply it to our own particular cases. And this cannot but be matter of great humiliation unto us in these sad and distracted times, when besides our civil breaches, which threaten desolation to the state, there should be so many and wide divisions in the church; that after so long enjoyment of the word of God, the scripture should be to so many men as a sealed book, and they, like the Egyptians, have the dark side of this glorious pillar towards them still, that men should be tossed to and fro like children, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, and suffer themselves to be bewitched, devoured, brought into bondage, spoiled, led away captive, unskilful in the word of righteousness, unable to discern good and evil, to prove and try the spirits whether they be of God, always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; and this not only in matters problematical, or circumstantial, wherein learned and godly men may differ one from another, and yet still the peace and unity of the church be preserved, (for things of this nature ought not to be occasions of schism, or

secessions from one another,) but in matters which concern life and godliness. These things, I say, cannot but be matter of humiliation unto all that fear God, and love the prosperity of Sion, and occasions the more earnestly to excite them unto this wisdom in the text, to hear what God the Lord says, and to lay his righteous ways so to heart, as to walk steadfastly in them, and never to stumble at them, or fall from them.

Now there are two things which, I take it, the prophet in this close of his prophecy seems principally to aim at : namely, the judgments, and the blessings of God. His righteous ways in his threatenings against impenitent, and in his promises made unto penitent sinners. These are the things which wise and prudent men will consider in times of trouble.

For judgments ; there is a twofold knowledge of them : the one natural, by sense ; the other spiritual by faith. By the former way wicked men do abundantly know the afflictions which they suffer, even unto vexation and anguish of spirit. They fret themselves, Isa. viii. 21. They are gray-headed with very trouble and sorrow, Hos. vii. 9. They gnaw their tongues for pain, Rev. xvi. 10. They pine away in their iniquities, Lev. xxvi. 39. They are mad in their calamities, have trembling hearts, failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, &c. Deut. xxviii. 34. 65. and yet for all this they are said in the scripture, when they burn, when they consume, when they are devoured, not to know any of this, or to lay it to heart, Isa. xlii. 25. Hos. vii. 9. Jer. xii. 11. and the reason is, because they know it not by faith, nor in a spiritual manner in order unto God. They did not see his name, nor hear his rod, nor consider his hand and counsel in it, nor measure his judgments by his word, nor look on

them, as the fruits of sin, leading to repentance, and teaching righteousness, nor as the arguments of God's displeasure, humbling us under his holy hand, and guiding us to seek his face, and to recover our peace with him. This is the spiritual and prudent way of knowing judgments, Mic. vi. 9. Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. xxvii. 9. Lev. xxvi. 40—42. True wisdom looks on things in their causes: resolves judgments into the causes of them, our sins to be bewailed, God's wrath to be averted; makes this observation upon them—Now I find by experience, that God is a God of truth; often have I heard judgments threatened against sin, and now I see that God's threatenings are not empty wind, but that all his words have truth and substance in them. The first part of wisdom is, to see judgments in the word before they come, and to hide from them: for as faith in regard of promises is the substance of things hoped for, and seeth a being in them while they are yet but to come; so is it in regard of threatenings the substance of things feared, and can see a being in judgments before they are felt. The next part of wisdom is, to see God in judgments, in the rods when they are actually come, and to know them in order unto him. And that knowledge stands in two things; first to resolve them unto him as their author, for nothing can hurt us without a commission from God, John xix. 11. Satan spoils Job of his children, the Sabeans and Chaldeans of his goods; but he looks above all these unto God, acknowledging his goodness in giving, his power in taking away, and blesseth his name, Job i. 21. Joseph looks from the malice of his brethren, unto the providence of God; "He sent me before you to preserve life, Gen. xlv. 5. If the whale swallow Jonah, God prepares him, Jonah i. 17. and if he

vomit him up again, God speaks unto him, chap. ii. 10. 2. To direct him unto them as the end, to be taught by them to seek the Lord, and wait on him in the way of his judgments, to be more penitent for sin, more fearful, and watchful against it, to study and practise the skill of suffering as christians, according to the will of God, that he may be glorified, *Psa. xciv. 12. cxix. 67. 71. Zech. xiii. 9. Isa. xxvi. 9. Heb. xii. 11. Deut. viii. 16. 1 Pet. iv. 16. 19.*

So likewise for blessings ; there is a double knowledge of them, one sensual by the flesh, the other spiritual in the conscience. The former is but a brutish and Epicurean feeding on them without fear, as Israel upon quails in the wilderness, as swine which feed on the fruit that falls down, but never look up to the tree whereon it grew ; to use blessings as Adam did the forbidden fruit, being drawn by the beauty of them to forget God ; as our prophet complains, *Hos. xiii. 6.* But spiritual knowledge of blessings, is to taste and see the goodness of the Lord in them ; to look up to him as the author of them, acknowledging that it is he who giveth us power to get wealth, and any other good thing, *Deut. viii. 17, 18. Psa. cxxvii. 1. Prov. x. 22.* and to be drawn by them unto him as their end, to the adoring of his bounty, to the admiration of his goodness, to more cheerfulness and stronger engagements unto his service ; to say with Jacob, He gives me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, therefore he shall be my God, *Gen. xxviii. 20.* He giveth me all things richly to enjoy ; therefore I will trust in him, *1 Tim. vi. 17.* Catalogues of mercy should beget resolutions of obedience, *Josh. xxiv. 2. 14.*

Again, we have here a singular commendation of the doctrine which the prophet had delivered unto the

people of God ; namely, that it was altogether right, and the way which God required them to walk in, whatever judgment carnal and corrupt minds might pass upon it. Now the doctrine of God's judgments, precepts, and promises, are said to be right divers ways.

1. In regard of their equity and reasonableness, there is nothing more profoundly and exactly rational than true religion ; and therefore conversion is called by our Saviour conviction. There is a power in the word of God to stop the mouths and dispel the cavillations of all contradictors ; so that they shall not be able to resist, or speak against the truth that is taught, John xvi. 8. Tit. i. 9, 10. Acts vi. 10. Matt. xxii. 34. And the apostle calleth his ministry a declaration and a manifestation of the truth of God unto the consciences of men, 1 Cor. ii. 4. 2 Cor. iv. 2. and Apollos is said mightily to have convinced the Jews, showing or demonstrating by the scripture that Jesus was Christ, Acts xviii. 28. therefore the apostle calleth the devoting of ourselves unto God, a reasonable service, Rom. xii. 1. and those that obey not the word, are called unreasonable and absurd men, that have not wisdom to discern the truth and equity of the ways of God, 2 Thess. iii. 2. What can be more reasonable, than that he who made all things for himself, should be served by the creatures which he made ? That we should live unto him who gave us our being ? That the Supreme should be obeyed, the infallible truth believed ? That he who can destroy, should be feared ? That he who doth reward should be loved and trusted in ? That absolute justice should vindicate itself against presumptuous disobedience ; and absolute goodness, extend mercy unto whom it pleaseth ? It is no marvel that the Holy Spirit doth

brand wicked men, throughout the scripture, with the disgraceful title of fools, because they reject that which is the supreme rule of wisdom, and hath the greatest perfection and exactness of reason in it, Jer. viii. 9.

2. In regard of their consonancy and harmony within themselves, as that which is right and straight hath all its parts equal and agreeing one unto another : so all the parts of divine doctrine are exactly suitable and conformable to each other. The promises of God are not yea and nay, but yea and amen, 2 Cor. i. 19, 20. However, there may be seeming repugnances to a carnal and captious eye, (which may seem of purpose allowed for the exercise of our diligence in searching, and humility in adoring the profoundness and perfection of the word,) yet the scriptures have no obliquity in them at all, but all the parts thereof do most intimately consent with one another, as being written by the Spirit of truth who cannot lie nor deceive, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

3. In regard of their directness unto that end for which they were revealed unto men, being the strait road unto eternal life, able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance, Acts xx. 32. In which respect the word is called the word of life, Acts. v. 20. And the gospel of salvation, Eph. i. 13. yea, salvation itself, John iv. 22. xii. 50. Acts xxviii. 28. as being the way to it, and the instrument of it, 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. James i. 21.

4. In regard of their conformity to the holy nature and will of God, which is the original rule of all rectitude and perfection. Law is nothing but the will of the lawgiver, revealed with an intention to bind those who are under it, and for the ordering of whom

it was revealed. That will being in God most holy and perfect, the law or word, which is but the manifestation of it, must needs be holy and perfect too ; therefore it is called the acceptable and perfect will of God, Rom. xii. 2. Col. i. 1. It is also called a word of truth, importing a conformity between the mind and will of the speaker, and the word which is spoken by him ; in which respect it is said to be holy, just, and good, Rom. vii. 12.

5. In regard of the smoothness, plainness, and perspicuity of them, in the which men may walk surely, easily, without danger of wandering, stumbling, or miscarriage ; as a man is not in danger of missing a way, if it be straight and direct, without any turnings ; and in no great danger of falling in it, if it be plain and smooth, and no stumbling block left in it. Now such is the word of God to those who make it their way, a straight way, which looketh directly forward, Psa. v. 8. Heb. xii. 13. An even and smooth way, which hath no offence or stumbling block in it, Psa. xxvi. 12. cxix. 165. It is true, there are hard things to exercise the study and diligence, the faith and prayers of the profoundest scholars ; waters wherein an elephant may swim ; but yet as nature hath made things of greatest necessity to be most obvious and common, as air, water, bread, and the like ; whereas things of greater rarity, as gems and jewels, are matters of honour and ornaments, not of daily use : so the wisdom of God hath so tempered the scriptures, as that from thence the wisest Solomon may fetch jewels for ornament, and the poorest Lazarus bread for life ; but these things which are of common necessity, as matters of faith, love, worship, obedience, which are universally requisite unto the common salvation, (as the apostle expresseth it, Jude, ver. 3.

Tit. i. 4.) are so perspicuously set down in the holy scriptures, that every one who hath the Spirit of Christ, hath therewithal a judgment to discern so much of God's will as shall suffice to make him believe in Christ for righteousness, and by worship and obedience to serve him unto salvation. The way of holiness is so plain, that simple men are made wise enough to find it out, and way-faring men, though fools, do not err therein, *Psa. xix. 7. Isa. xxxii. 4. xxxv. 8. Matt. xi. 25.*

From all which we learn :

(1.) To take heed of picking quarrels at any word of God, or presuming to pass any bold and carnal censure of ours upon his righteous ways. When God doth set his word in the power and workings of it upon the spirit of any wicked man, making his conscience to hear it as the voice of God, it usually worketh one of these two effects : either it subdues the soul to the obedience of it by convincing, judging, and manifesting the secrets of his heart, so that he falleth down on his face and worshippeth God, *1 Cor. xiv. 25.* or else it doth by accident excite and enrage the natural love which is in every man to his lusts, stirring up all the proud arts and reasonings which the forge of a corrupt heart can shape in defence of those lusts against the sword of the Spirit which would cut them off ; as that which hindereth the course of a river, doth accidentally enrage the force of it, and cause it to swell and overrun the banks ; and from hence ariseth gain-saying and contradiction against the word of grace, and the ways of God as unequal and unreasonable, too strict, too severe, too hard to be observed, *Ezek. xviii. 25.* snuffing at it, *Mal. i. 13.* gathering odious consequences from it, *Rom. iii. 8.* replying against it,

Rom. ix. 19, 20. casting reproaches upon it, Jer. xx. 8, 9. enviously swelling at it, Acts xiii. 45. There are few sins more dangerous than this of picking quarrels at God's word, and taking up weapons against it. It will prove a burdensome stone to those who burden themselves with it, Zech. xii. 3. Matt. xxi. 44. Therefore whenever our crooked and corrupt reason doth offer to except against the ways of God as unequal, we must presently conclude as God doth, Ezek. xviii. 25. that the inequality is in us, and not in them. When the lame man stumbleth in a plain path, the fault is not in the way, but in the foot : nor is the potion but the palate to blame when a feverish distemper maketh that seem bitter, which indeed was sweet. He that removeth in a boat from the shore, in the judgment of sense seeth the houses or trees on the shore to totter and move, whereas the motion is in the boat, and not in them. Unclean and corrupt hearts have unclean notions of the purest things, and conceive of God as if he were such a one as themselves, Psal. l. 21.

(2.) It should teach us to come to God's word always as to a rule, by which we are to measure ourselves, and take heed of wresting that to the corrupt fancies of our own evil hearts ; as the apostle saith some men do to their own destruction, 2 Pet. iii. 16. Acts xiii. 10. Every wicked man doth, though not formally and explicitly, yet really and in truth, set up his own will against God's, resolving to do what pleaseth himself, and not that which may please God ; and consequently followeth that reason and counsel which waits upon his own will, and not that word which revealeth God's. Yet because he that will serve himself, would fain deceive himself too (that so he may not do it with less regret of conscience)

and would fain seem God's servant, but be his own, therefore corrupt reason sets itself on work to exco-gitate such distinctions and evasions, as may serve to reconcile God's word and a man's own lust together. Lust says, Steal; God says, No, "thou shalt not steal;" carnal reason, the advocate of lust, comes in and distinguisheth: I may not steal from a neighbour, but I may weaken an enemy, or pay myself the stipend that belongs to my service, if others do not; and under this evasion, most innocent men may be made a prey to violent soldiers, who use the name of public interest to palliate their own greediness. Certainly, it is a high presumption to tamper with the word of truth, and make it bear false witness in favour of our own sins; and God will bring it to a trial at last, whose will shall stand, his or ours.

Lastly: this serveth as an excellent boundary, both to the ministration of the preacher, and to the faith of the hearer, in the dispensing of the word. 1. To us in our ministry, that we deliver nothing unto the people but the right ways of the Lord, without any commixtures or con-temporations of our own. Mixtures are useful only for these two purposes, either to slacken and abate something that is excessive, or to supply something that is deficient, and to collect a virtue and efficacy out of many things, each one of which alone would have been ineffectual, and so all heterogeneous mixtures do plainly intimate, either a viciousness to be corrected, or a weakness to be supplied, in every one of the simples which are by human wisdom tempered together in order unto some effect to be wrought by them. Now it were great wickedness to charge any one of these upon the pure and perfect word of God; and by consequence, to use deceit and insincerity, by adulterating it, either by

such glosses as diminish and take away from the force of it, as the Pharisees did in their carnal interpretations, (confuted by our Saviour, Matt. v. 21. 27. 38. 43.) or by such super-inducements of human traditions as argue any defect, as they also did use, Matt. xv. 2. 9. Human arts and learning are of excellent use, as instruments in the managing and searching, and as means and witnesses in the explication of holy writ, when piously and prudently directed unto those uses. But to stamp any thing of but a human original with a divine character, and obtrude it upon the consciences of men (as the papists do their unwritten traditions) to bind unto obedience, to take any dead child of ours, as the harlot did, 1 Kings iii. 20. and lay it in the bosom of the scripture, and father it upon God ; to build any structure of ours in the road to heaven, and stop up the way, is one of the highest and most daring presumptions that the pride of man can aspire unto : to erect a throne in the consciences of his fellow-creatures, and to counterfeit the great seal of Heaven for the countenancing of his own forgeries, is a sin most severely provided against by God, with special prohibitions and threatenings, Deut. xii. 32. xviii. 20. Jer. xxvi. 2. Prov. xxx. 6. This therefore must be the great care of the ministers of the gospel, to show their fidelity in delivering only the counsel of God unto his people, Acts xx. 27. to be as the two golden pipes which received oil from the olive-branches, and then emptied it into the gold, Zech. iv. 12. First, to receive from the Lord, and then to deliver to the people, Ezek. ii. 7. Isa. xxi. 10. Ezek. iii. 4. 1 Cor. xi. 23. 1 Pet. iv. 11. 2. The people are hereby taught ; (1.) To examine the doctrines of men by the rule and standard of the word, and to

measure them there, that so they may not be seduced by the craftiness of deceivers, and may be the more confirmed and comforted by the doctrine of sincere teachers ; for though the judgment of interpretation belong principally to the ministers of the word, yet God hath given unto all believers a judgment of discretion, to try the spirits, and to search the scriptures, whether the things which they hear be so or not, 1 John iv. 1. Acts xvii. 11. 1 Thess. v. 21. for no man is to pin his own soul and salvation by a blind obedience upon the words of a man who may mislead him ; nay, not upon the words of an angel, if it were possible for an angel to deceive, Gal. i. 8. 1 Kings xiii. 18. 21. but only and immediately upon the scripture, except when the blind lead the blind, the leader only should fall into the ditch, and the other go to heaven for his blind obedience in following his guides towards hell ; whereas our Saviour tells us both shall fall, though but one be the leader, Matt. xv. 14. xxiii. 15. (2.) Having proved all things, to hold fast that which is good, with all readiness to receive the righteous ways of God, and submit unto them, how mean soever the instruments be in our eyes, how contrary soever his message be to our wills and lusts. When God doth manifest his spirit and word in the mouths of his ministers, we are not to consider the vessel, but the treasure, and to receive it as from Christ, who to the end of the world, in the dispensation of his ordinances, speaketh from heaven unto the church, 1 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 20. Heb. xii. 25. Matt. xxviii. 20.

Further : in that it is said, that the just will walk in them, we may observe two things.

1. That obedience, and walking in the right ways of the Lord, is the end of the ministry, that the

saints might be perfected that the body of Christ might be edified, that men might grow up into Christ in all things, Eph. iv. 11. 15. that their eyes might be opened, and they turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 16—18. The prophet concludeth that he hath laboured in vain ; if Israel be not gathered, Isa. xlix. 4, 5. Without this, the law is vain, the pen of the scribe is vain, Jer. viii. 8. better not know the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment which was delivered unto us, 2 Pet. ii. 21. We should esteem it a great misery to be without preaching, without ordinances, and so indeed it is ; of all famine, that of the word of the Lord is the most dreadful ; better be with God's presence in a wilderness, than in Canaan without him, Exod. xxxiii. 15. better bread of affliction, and water of affliction, than a famine of hearing the word ; to have our teachers removed, Amos viii. 11. Isa. xxx. 20. this is mischief upon mischief, when the law perisheth from the priest, and there is no vision, Ezek. vii. 26. and yet it is much better to be in this case, without a teaching priest, and without the law, than to enjoy them, and not to walk answerably unto them ; where the word is not a savour of life, it is a savour of death unto death, exceedingly multiplying the damnation of those that do despise it, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. Matt. xi. 22. 24. 1. It doth ripen those sins that it finds, making them much more sinful than in other men, because committed against greater light and more mercy. One and the same sin in a heathen is not so heinous and hateful as in a christian. Those trees on which the sun constantly shines, have their fruit grow riper and greater than those which grow in a shady and cold place. The

rain will hasten the growth as well of weeds as of corn, and make them ranker than in a dry and barren ground, John ix. 41. xv. 22. 24. 2. It doth superadd many more and greater; for the greatest sins of all are those which are committed against light and grace; sins against the law and prophets, greater than those that are committed against the glimmerings of nature, Ezek. ii. 3. 5—7. and sins against Christ and the gospel, greater than those against the law, Heb. ii. 2: x. 28, 29. Such are, unbelief, impenitency, apostacy, despising of salvation, preferring death and sin before Christ and mercy; judging ourselves unworthy of eternal life, &c. 3. It doth by these means both hasten and multiply judgments. The sins of the church are much sooner ripe for the sickle than the sins of Amorites; they are near unto cursing, Heb. vi. 8. Summer fruits are sooner shaken off than others, Amos viii. 1. Jer. i 11, 12. Christ comes quickly to remove his candlestick from the abusers of it, Rev. ii. 5. The word is a rich mercy in itself, but nothing makes it effectually and in the event a mercy unto us but our walking in it.

2. We learn from hence, that we never make the scriptures our rule to live and walk according unto them, till we be first justified, and made righteous. Our obedience to the rule of the law written in the scriptures, proceedeth from those suitable impressions of holiness wrought in the soul by the spirit of regeneration, which is called the writing of the law in our hearts, Jer. xxxi. 33. 2 Cor. iii. 3. or the casting of the soul into the mould of the word, as the phrase of the apostle seemeth to import, Rom. vi. vii. We are never fit to receive God's truth in the love and obedience of it, till we repent and be renewed. If God,

saith the apostle, will give repentance for the acknowledgment of the truth, 2 Tim. ii. 25. The wise in heart, that is, those who are truly godly, (for none but such are the scripture's wise men,) these will receive commandments; but a prating fool will fall, Prov. x. 8. where by prating I understand cavilling, contradiction, taking exceptions, making objections against the commandment, and so falling and stumbling at it, according to the saying of the apostle, James i. 19—21. "Let every man be swift to hear," that is, ready to learn the will of God, and to receive the commandment; but slow to speak, slow to wrath, that is, careful that he suffer no pride and passion to rise up and speak against the things which are taught, according as Job says, "Teach me, and I will hold my peace," Job vi. 24. for the only reason why men fret and swell, and speak against the truth of God, is this, because they will not work righteousness: "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," therefore men are contentious, because they love not to obey the truth, Rom. ii. 8. disobedience is the mother of gainsaying, Rom. x. 21. When we once resolve to lay apart all filthiness, then we will receive the word with meekness, and not before; none hear God's words, but they who are of God, John viii. 47. None hear the voice of Christ, but the sheep of Christ, John x. 4, 5. Christ preached is the power of God, and the wisdom of God; but it is only to them that are called; to others a stumbling block, and foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 24. "We speak wisdom," saith the apostle, but it is "amongst them that are perfect," 1 Cor. ii. 6. He that is subject unto one prince, doth not greatly care to study the laws of another: or if he do, it is in order to curiosity, and not unto duty. So long as men resolve concerning Christ, "We

will not have this man to reign over us," so long either they study not his word at all, or it is in order to some carnal and corrupt ends, and not either to obedience or salvation.

Hereby we may try our spiritual estate, whether we be just men or no ; if we make God's word our way, our rule, our delight, laying it up in our hearts, and labouring to be rich in it, that we may walk with more exactness. It was an ill sign of love to Christ, the master of the feast, when men chose rather to tend their cattle and grounds, than to wait on him, Luke xiv. 18. An ill sign of valuing his doctrine, when the loss of their swine made the Gadarenes weary of his company, Luke viii. 37. There was much work to do in the house, when Mary neglected it all, and sat at his feet to hear his doctrine, and yet was commended by him for it ? He was better pleased to see her hunger after the feast that he brought, than solicitous to provide a feast for him ; more delighted in her love to his doctrine, than her sister's care for his entertainment, Luke x. 41, 42. This is one of the surest characters of a godly man, that he makes the word in all things his rule and counsellor, labouring continually to get more acquaintance with God, and his holy will thereby, Prov. x. 14. Col. iii. 16. John xv. 7. It is his way ; and every man endeavours to be skilful in the way which he is to travel. It is his tool and instrument ; every workman must have that in a readiness, to measure and carry on all the parts of his work. It is his wisdom ; every one would be esteemed a wise man in that which is his proper function and profession. It is the mystery and trade unto which he is bound ; and every man would have the reputation of skill in his own trade. It is his charter, the grant of all the

privileges and immunities which belong unto him ; and every citizen would willingly know the privileges which he hath a right in. It is the testament and will of Christ, wherein are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises ; and what heir or child would be ignorant of the last will of his father ? Lastly, it is the law of Christ's kingdom, and it concerns every subject to know the duties, the rewards, the punishments that belong unto him in that relation.

Again, in that he saith, that the transgressors shall fal' therein, we learn, that the holy and right ways of he Lord in the ministry of his word set forth unto us, are unto wicked men turned into matter of falling ; and that two manner of ways. 1. By way of scandal they are offended at it : and, 2. By way of ruin, they are destroyed by it.

1. By way of scandal they are offended at it. So it is prophesied of Christ ; that as he should be for a sanctuary unto his people ; so to others who would not trust in him, but betake themselves to their own counsels, he should be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, for a gin and for a snare, Isa. viii. 14. " for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign to be spoken against," Luke ii. 34, 35. So he saith of himself, " For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not, might see ; and that they which see, might be made blind," John ix. 39. And this offence which wicked men take at Christ, is from the purity and holiness of his word which they cannot submit unto ; a stone of stumbling he is, and a rock of offence, to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient, 1 Pet. ii. 8. 2 Cor. ii. 14, 15. Thus Christ preached, was a sanctuary to Sergius Paulus the deputy, and a

stumbling block to Elymas the sorcerer ; a sanctuary to Dionysius and Damaris, and a stumbling block to the wits and philosophers of Athens ; a sanctuary to the Gentiles that begged the preaching of the gospel, and a stumbling block to the Jews that contradicted and blasphemed, Acts xiii. 42. 45. the former primarily, for salvation was the purpose of his coming ; there was sin enough to condemn the world before ; “ I came not,” saith he, “ to judge the world, but to save the world,” John xii. 47. the other occasionally, not by any intrinsical evil quality in the word, which is holy, just, good, and dealeth with all meekness and beseechings, even towards obstinate sinners ; but by reason of the pride and stubbornness of these men who dash against it : as that wholesome meat which ministers strength to a sound man, doth but feed the disease of another that sits at the same table with him ; the same light which is a pleasure to a strong eye, is a pain to a weak one ; the same sweet smells that delight one part, afflict another when distempered : and none of this by the infusion of malignant qualities, but only by an occasional working upon, and exciting of those which were there before.

And there are many things in the word of God, at which the corrupt hearts of wicked men are apt to stumble and be offended. As, first, the profoundness and depth of it, as containing great mysteries above the discovery or search of created reason. Such is the pride and wantonness of sinful wit, that it knows not how to believe what it cannot comprehend, and must have all doctrines tried at her bar, and measured by her balance ; as if a man should attempt to weigh out the earth in a pair of scales, or to empty the waters of the sea with a bucket. As soon as Paul mentioned the resurrection, presently the Athenian

wits mocked his doctrine, Acts xvii. 32. and it was a great stumbling block to Nicodemus to hear that a man must be born again, John iii. 4. Sarah hath much ado to believe beyond reason, Gen. xviii. 12. and Moses himself was a little staggered by this temptation, Num. xi. 21, 22. A very hard thing it is for busy and inquisitive reason to rest in the depth of the wisdom and counsel of God; and to adore the unsearchableness of his judgments, though even human laws tell us that reason of law is not always to be inquired into. The first great heresies against the highest mysteries of christian religion, the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, the hypostatical union, the Deity of the Holy Spirit, had their first rise among the Grecians, who were then the masters of wit and learning, and esteemed the rest of the world barbarous; and the old exception which they were wont to take at the doctrine of christianity was the foolishness of it, as the apostle notes, 1 Cor. i. 23.

The sanctity and strictness of it is contrary to the carnal wills and affections of men: for as corruption doth deify reason in the way of wisdom, not willingly allowing any mysteries above the scrutiny and comprehension of it; so doth it deify will in a way of liberty and power, and doth not love to have any authority set over that which may pinch or restrain it. As Joshua said to Israel, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God," Josh. xxiv. 19. we may say of the law, we cannot submit to the law because it is a holy law; the carnal mind is not, cannot be, subject to the law of God, Rom. viii. 7. Heat and cold will ever be offensive unto one another, and such are flesh and spirit, Gal. v. 17. Therefore ordinarily the arguments against the ways of God, have been drawn from politic or carnal interests. Jeroboam will

not worship at Jerusalem, lest Israel should revolt to the house of David, 1 Kings xii. 27. Amos must not prophesy against the idolatry of Israel, for the land is not able to bear all his words, Amos vii. 10. The Jews conclude Christ must not be let alone, lest the Romans come and take away their place and nation, John xi. 48. Demetrius and the craftsmen will by no means have Diana spoken against, because by making shrines for her they got their wealth, Acts xix. 24, 25. Corruption will close with religion a great way, and hear gladly, and do many things willingly, and part with much to escape damnation ; but there is a particular point of rigour and strictness in every unregenerate man's case, which when it is set on close upon him, causeth him to stumble, and to be offended, and to break the treaty. The hypocrites in the prophet will give rams, and rivers of oil, and the first-born of their body for the sin of their soul : but to "do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God," to do away the treasures of wickedness, the scant measure, the bag of deceitful weights, violence, lies, circumvention, the statutes of Omri, or the counsels of the house of Ahab ; this is intolerable : they will rather venture smiting and desolation than be held to so severe terms, Mic. vi. 6. 16. The young man will come to Christ, yea, run to him and kneel, and desire instruction touching the way to eternal life, and walk with much care in observation of the commandments ; but if he must part with all, and instead of great possessions, take up a cross and follow Christ, and fare as he fared, this is indeed a hard saying : he that came running, went away grieving and displeased, and upon this one point doth he and Christ part, Mark x. 17. 22. Herod will hear John gladly, and do many things, and observe

and reverence him as a just and holy man; but in the case of Herodias he must be excused; upon this issue doth he and salvation shake hands, Mark vi. 20. 27. This is the difference between hypocritical and sincere conversion; that goes far, and parts with much, and proceeds to almost; but when it comes to the very turning point, and ultimate act of regeneration, he then plays the part of an unwise son, and stays in the place of the breaking forth of children, Hos. xiii. 13. As a foolish merchant, who in a rich bargain of a thousand pounds breaks upon a difference of twenty shillings: but the other is contented to part with all, to suffer the loss of all, to carry on the treaty to a full and final conclusion, to have all the armour of the strong man taken from him, that Christ may divide the spoils, Luke xi. 22. to do the hardest duties if they be commanded, Gen. xxii. 3.

The searching, convincing, and penetrating quality which is in the word, is a great matter of offence unto wicked men, when it cuts them to the heart, as Stephen's sermon did his hearers, Acts vii. 54. Light is of a discovering and manifesting property, Eph. v. 13. and for that reason, is hated by every one that doth evil, John iii. 20. for though the pleasure of sin unto a wicked man be sweet, yet there is bitterness in the root and bottom of it; he who loves to enjoy the pleasure, cannot endure to hear of the guilt.

Now the work of the word is to take men in their own heart, Ezek. xiv. 5. to make manifest to a man the secrets of his own heart, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. to pierce, like arrows, the hearts of God's enemies, Psa. xlv. 5. to divide asunder the soul and spirits, the joints and marrow, and to be a discernor of the thoughts and

intents of the heart, Heb. iv. 12. Isa. xlix. 2. This act of discovery cannot but exceedingly gall the spirits of wicked men: it is like the voice of God unto Adam in Paradise, "Adam, where art thou?" or like the voice of Ahijah to the wife of Jeroboam, "I am sent unto thee with heavy tidings," 1 Kings xiv. 6.

The plainness and simplicity of the gospel is likewise matter of offence to these men, 2 Cor. x. 10. and that partly upon the preceding reason; for the more plain the word is, the more immediate access it hath unto the conscience, and operation upon it. So much as is merely human elegancy, fineness of wit, and delicacy of expression, doth oftentimes stop at fancy, and take that up, as the body of Asahel caused the passers by to stand still and gaze, 2 Sam. ii. 23. And wicked men can be contented to admit the word any whither, so they can keep it out of their conscience, which is the only proper subject of it, 2 Cor. iv. 2. When I hear men magnify quaint and polite discourses in the ministry of the word, and speak against sermons that are plain and wholesome, I look upon it not so much as an act of pride, (though the wisdom of the flesh is very apt to scorn the simplicity of the gospel,) but indeed as an act of fear and cowardice, because where all other external trimmings and dresses are wanting to tickle the fancy, where the word hath the more downright and sad operation upon the conscience, and must consequently the more startle and terrify.

The great difficulty and indeed impossibility of obeying it in the strictness and rigour of it, is another ground of scandal, that God in his word should command men to do that which indeed cannot be done; this was matter of astonishment to the disciples themselves, when our Saviour told them that it was "easier

for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," Mark x. 25. This was a cavil of the disputant in the apostle, against the counsels of God, "Why doth he yet find fault?" if he harden whom he will, why doth he complain of our hardness, which it is impossible for us to prevent, because none can resist his will? Rom. ix. 19. Now to this scandal we answer; 1. That the law of God was not originally, nor is it intrinsically, or in the nature of the thing impossible, but accidentally, and by reason of natural corruption which is enmity against it; a burden may be very portable in itself, which he who is a cripple is not able to bear; the defect is not in the law, but in us, Rom. viii. 3. 2. That of this impossibility there may be made a most excellent use, that being convinced of impotency in ourselves, we may have recourse to the perfect obedience and righteousness of Christ, to pardon all our violations upon it, Gal. iii. 21. 24. 3. Being regenerated and endued with the Spirit of Christ, the law becomes evangelically possible unto us again; yea, not only possible, but sweet and easy, Rom. vii. 2. 1 John v. 2. Matt. xi. 30. Though impossible to the purpose of justification and legal covenant, which requireth perfection of obedience under pain of the curse, Gal. iii. 10. in which sense it is a yoke which cannot be borne, Acts xv. 10. A commandment which cannot be endured; Heb. xii. 20. yet possible to the purpose of acceptance of our services done in the obedience of it; the spiritual part of them being presented by the intercession, and the carnal defects covered by the righteousness of Christ, in whom the Father is always well pleased. 4. If any wicked man presume to harden himself in the practice of sins, under this

pretence, that it is impossible for him to avoid them, because God hardeneth whom he will; though the apostolical increpation be answer sufficient, "Who art thou that repliest against God?" yet he may further know, that he is not only hardened judicially by the sentence of God, but most willingly also by his own stubborn love of sin, and giving himself over unto greediness in sinning, and thereby doth actively bring upon himself those indispositions unto duty, so that the law being impossible to be performed by him, is indeed no other than he would himself have it to be, as bearing an active enmity and antipathy unto it.

The mercy and free grace of God in the promises, is unto wicked men an occasion of stumbling while they turn it into lasciviousness, and continue in sin that grace may abound, Rom. vi. 1. Jude, ver. 4. and venture to make work for the blood of Christ, not being led by the goodness of God unto repentance, but hardening themselves in impenitency because God is good, Rom. ii. 4. There is not anything at which wicked men do more ordinarily stumble than at mercy, as gluttons surfeit most upon the greatest dainties, venturing upon this ground to go on in sin, because they cannot out-sin mercy; and to put off repentance from day to day, because they are still under the offers of mercy; making mercy not a sanctuary unto which to fly from sin, but a sanctuary to protect and countenance sin; and so by profane and desperate presumption, turning the very mercy of God into a judgment, and savour of death unto themselves, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. Num. xv. 30. pretending liberty from sin, that they may continue in it, and abuse God by his own gifts.

Lastly, the threatenings of God set forth in his

word, and executed in his judgments upon wicked men, are great occasions of stumbling unto them, when they are not thereby with Manasseh humbled under God's mighty hand, but with Pharaoh hardened the more in their stubbornness against him. There is such desperate wickedness in the hearts of some men, that they can even sit down and rest in the resolutions of perishing, resolving to enjoy the pleasures of sin while they may. "To-morrow we shall die," therefore in the mean time, "let us eat and drink," 1 Cor. xv. 32. "This evil is of the Lord, why should we wait for the Lord any longer?" 2 Kings vi. 33. There are three men in the scripture that have a special brand or mark of ignominy set upon them, Cain, Dathan, and Ahaz. "The Lord set a mark upon Cain," Gen. iv. 15. This is that Dathan, and this is that Ahaz, Numb. xxvi. 9. 2 Chron. xxviii 22. and if we examine the reasons, we shall find that the sin of stubbornness had a special hand in it. Cain's offering was not accepted, upon this he grew wroth and sullen, and stubborn against God's gentle warning, and slew his brother. Dathan and his companions sent for by Moses, return a proud and stubborn answer, "We will not come up, we will not come up." Ahaz greatly distressed by the king of Syria, by the Edomites, by the Philistines, by the Assyrian, and in the midst of all this distress, stubborn still, and trespassing more against the Lord. It is one of the saddest symptoms in the world for a man or a nation not to be humbled under the correcting hand of God, but like an anvil to grow harder under blows, and a most sure argument that God will not give over, but go on to multiply his judgments still; for he will overcome when he judgeth, and therefore will judge till he overcome. In musical notation, there are but

eight degrees, and then the same returns again ; and philosophers when they distinguish degrees in qualities, do usually make the eighth degree to be the highest ; but in the wrath of God against those who impenitently and stubbornly stand out against his judgments, we shall find no fewer than eight and twenty degrees threatened by God himself, “ I will punish seven times more,” and yet “ seven times more,” and again, “ seven times more,” and once more, “ seven times more for your sins,” Lev. xxvi. 18. 21. 24. 28. Thus wicked men do not only stumble at the word by way of scandal, but also—

2. By way of ruin, because they are sure in the conclusion to be destroyed by it ; for the rock stands still, the ship only is broken that dasheth against it. God's word is, and will be too hard for the pride of men ; the more they resist it, the mightier will it appear in their condemnation. The weak corn which yields to the wind, is not harmed by it, but the proud oak which resists it, is many times broken in pieces. The soul which submits to the word, is saved by it ; the soul which rebels against it, is sure to perish. Therefore since the word comes not to any man in vain, but returns glory to God either in his conversion, or in his hardening ; it greatly concerneth every man to come unto it, with meek, penitent, docile, tractable, believing, obedient resolutions, and to consider how vain and desperate a thing it is for a potsherd to strive with a rod of iron ; for the pride and wrath of man to give a challenge to the justice and power of God ; for briars and thorns to set themselves in battle against fire. As our God is a consuming fire himself, so his law is a fiery law, Deut. xxxiii. 2. and his word in the mouth of his ministers a fire, Jer. v. 14. 23. 29. If we be gold, it will purge us ; if thorns, it wil-

devour and feed upon us. "This is the condemnation," saith our Saviour, "that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light," John iii. 19. There was damnation in the world before while it lay in darkness, and in mischief, and knew not whither it went, but not so heavy damnation as that which groweth out of light. When physic, which should remove the disease, doth cooperate with it, then death comes with the more pain and the more speed. The stronger the conviction of sin is, the deeper will be the wrath against it, if it be not by repentance avoided. No surfeit more dangerous than that of bread, no judgment more terrible than that which grows out of mercy, known and despised; "The word which I have spoken," saith Christ, "the same shall judge you at the last day," John xii. 48. Every principle of truth, which is by the word begotten in the hearts of disobedient sinners, and is held down, and suppressed by unrighteousness, lies there like fire raked up under ashes, which at that great day will kindle into an unquenchable flame. The word can bring much of hell upon the spirit of impenitent sinners here. It can hew, and cut, and pierce, and burn, and torment, and root out, and pull down, and destroy, and strike with trembling and amazement the proudest and securest sinners, Hos. vi. 5. Acts vii. 54. Heb. iv. 12. Isa. xlix. 2. Psa. xlv. 5. Rev. xi. 5. 10. Jer. i. 10. 2 Cor. x. 4. Acts xxiv. 25. We need no messengers from the dead to tell us of the torments there: all the rhetoric in hell cannot set forth hell more to the life than Moses and the prophets have done already, Luke xvi. 31. But oh what a hell will it be at last, when the word which warned us of it, shall throw us into it! When every offer of mercy which we have refused, and every

threatening of wrath which we have despised, shall accompany us unto the tribunal of Christ, to testify against us, and into the fire of hell, to upbraid us with our own perdition ! Oh the doleful condition of impenitent sinners ! If they have not the word, they perish for the want ; and if they have it, they perish doubly for the contempt of it. O that men would consider the terror of the Lord, and be persuaded ! and that they would learn so much wisdom, as not to arm the very mercy of God against themselves. A bridge is made to give us a safe passage over a dangerous river, but he who stumbles on the bridge, is in danger to fall into the river. The word is given as a means to carry us over hell unto heaven ; but he who stumbles and quarrels at this means, shall fall in thither, from whence otherwise he had been delivered by it.



